

ADVENTURES

OF

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

(TOM SAWYER'S COMRADE).

SCENE: THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

TIME: FORTY TO FIFTY YEARS AGO.

WITH ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

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DIE AVONTURE VAN HUCKLEBERRY FINN MARK TWAIN



*Vertaal deur André P. Brink
John Malherbe Edms Bpk*

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**Die
Avonture
van
Huckleberry Finn**

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The Mississippi of Huckleberry Finn

SECTION 1

You don't know about me^{e1}, without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter^{e2}. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary^{e3}. Aunt Polly—Tom's Aunt Polly, she is—and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book—which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up, is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece—all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, Judge Thatcher, he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day^{e4} apiece, all the year round—more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. I got into my old rags, and my sugar-hogshead^{e5} again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer, he hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them. That is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.

After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses^{e6} and the Bulrushers;³ and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by-and-by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him; because I don't take no stock in dead people^{e7}.

Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff^{e8} too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself.

Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid^{5e9}, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now, with a spelling-book. She worked me middling hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease up. I couldn't stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson would say, "Dont put your feet up there, Huckleberry^{e10};" and "dont scrunch up like that, Huckleberry—set up straight;" and pretty soon she would say, "Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?" Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad, then, but I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewhere; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular. She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn't say it for the whole world; *she* was going to live so as to go to the good place^{e11}. Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good.

Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and, she said, not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.

Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome. By-and-by they fetched the niggers^{e12} in and had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed. I went up to my room with a piece of candle

and put it on the table. Then I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead^{e13}. The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooing about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper something to me and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so down-hearted and scared, I did wish I had some company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle^{e14}; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away^{e15}. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horse-shoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider.

I set down again, a shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death, now, and so the widow wouldn't know. Well,

after a long time I heard the clock away off in the town go boom—boom—boom—twelve licks—and all still again—stiller than ever. Pretty soon I heard a twig snap^{e16}, down in the dark amongst the trees—something was a stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a “*me-yow! me-yow!*” down there. That was good! Says I, “*me-yow! me-yow!*” as soft as I could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the window onto the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground and crawled in amongst the trees, and sure enough there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

Chapter 1

Van my sal julle net weet as julle al ’n boek met die naam *Die Avonture van Tom Sawyer* gelees het, maar dit maak nie saak nie. Daardie boek is meneer Mark Twain se werk en dis naasteby die waarheid. Hier en daar het hy iets ’n bietjie verdraai, maar in hoofsaak is dit darem waar. En wat is dit nou? Ek het nog nooit ’n mens geken wat nie een of ander tyd ’n leuen vertel het nie, behalwe tant Polly, of die weduwee, of miskien Mary. Van tant Polly (dis nou Tom se tante) en Mary en die weduwee Douglas word in daardie boek vertel, en dis alles so te sê waar, met net hier en daar ’n leuentjie, soos ek reeds gesê het.

Nou daardie boek het só geëindig: Ek en Tom het die geld gekry wat die rowers in die grot weggesteek het, en dit het ons ryk gemaak. Elkeen van ons het sesduisend dollar gekry—alles in goud. ’n Vrees- like klomp geld toe alles op ’n hoop gestawel was. En toe’t die regter, Thatcher, dit geneem en teen rente gaan belê en so’t ons elk ’n dollar per dag gekry, jaar in en jaar uit—meer as wat mens kon gebruik. Weduwee Douglas het my as haar seun aangeneem en besluit om ’n bietjie beskawing in my in te prent; maar dit was nie maklik om daar in haar huis te bly nie. Daarvoor was die weduwee glad te ellendig gereeld en netjies in al haar doen en late. En toe ek dit nou nie meer langer kon hou nie, het ek spore gemaak. Ek het weer my verslonste ou klere aangetrek en my paprandhoed opgesit en toe het ek opnuut vry en tevrede gevoel. Maar Tom Sawyer het my raakgeloop en vertel dat hy van plan was

om 'n rowerbende te stig, en ek kon daarby aan- sluit as ek na die weduwee sou teruggaan en weer ordentlik lewe. Toe't ek maar teruggegaan.

Die weduwee het my nat gehuil, my 'n arme verlore lammetjie en 'n hele klomp ander goed genoem, maar sy't daar niks slegs by bedoel nie. Sy't my weer die spul nuwe klere aangetrek, en toe moes ek maar van voor af sweet en sweet en benoud voel. En die hele ou storie het weer begin. Die weduwee het 'n klokkie gelui vir aandete en jy moes sorg dat jy betyds is. Maar as jy by die tafel kom, kon jy nie sommer wegval nie; jy moes eers sit en wag dat die weduwee haar kop laat sak en oor die kos sit en mompel—al was daar rêrig niks mee verkeerd nie. Dit wil sê: die kos self was skaflik, maar ongelukkig het sy alles apart gekook. Dis 'n ander storie as mens 'n klomp stukkies en brok- kies alles saam in een pot gooi. Dan raak alles mooi deurmekaar en die sous week deur die hele lot, en alles smaak sommer vorentoe.

Ná aandete het sy dan gewoonlik haar boek gaan haal en vir my van Moses in die biesies gelees, en ek het die ene ore gesit en luister om alles van hom te hoor. Maar mettertyd het ek agtergekom dat Moses 'n dekselse lang ruk al dood is en toe't ek nie meer in hom belang gestel nie, want van dooie mense hou ek nie juis nie.

Ná 'n rukkie wou ek graag weer 'n slag rook en ek het die weduwee se toestemming gevra, maar sy wou nie. Sy't gesê dis 'n nare gewoon- te en dis nie skoon nie en ek moet probeer om dit nie weer te doen nie. Party mense is mos nou maar so. Hulle kry 'n hekel aan 'n ding waarvan hulle niks weet nie. Daar het sy nou so 'n bohaai gemaak oor ou Moses wat tog g'n familie van haar was nie en wat vir g'n mens van nut kon wees nie, want hy was oor die rooibult—en in my keel klim sy af omdat ek iets doen wat darem 'n bietjie goed daarin het. En sy self het gesnuif—maar dáármee was daar natuurlik niks verkeerd nie, want dit was mos sy wat dit gedoen het.

Haar suster, juffrou Watson, 'n skaflike, skraal oujongnoot met 'n bril, het juis toe by haar kom inwoon. En sy het my nou met 'n spel- lingboek bygedam. Omtrent 'n uur het sy my taamlik kwaai op my herrie gespeel; toe het die weduwee haar 'n bietjie laat bedaar. Ek sou dit ook nie veel langer kon uitgehou het nie. Toe was dit weer gruwelik vervelig vir 'n voile uur en ek het kriewelrig geraak. Kort-kort het juffrou Watson gesê: „Moenie jou voete daar op die bank sit nie. Huckleberry”; of „Moenie so krom sit nie, Huckleberry, sit regop.” En dan weer: „Moenie so gaap en rek nie, Huckleberry. Hoekom probeer jy jou nie 'n slag gedra nie?” En toe begin sy my alles van die warmplek vertel, en ek sê ek wens ek was liewer daar. Dit het haar die joos in gemaak, maar ek het daar tog niks by bedoel nie. Ek wou maar net iewers heen-gaan; ek wou 'n bietjie afwisseling hê en dit het my nie juis getraak wáár ek beland nie. Sy't gesê dat dit 'n gruwelike ding was wat ek gesê het; sy sou vir niks op aarde so 'n ding sê nie; sy was van plan om so te lewe dat sy in die goeieplek sou kom. Nou ja, ek kon sowaar nie enige nut daarin sien om na die plek te gaan waar sy sou wees nie, en daarom het ek my voorgeneem dat ek maar nie sou probeer nie. Ek het dit egter nie vir haár gesê

nie, want dit sou tog net weer moeilikheid veroorsaak en niks goeds meebring nie.

Maar nou't sy 'n wegspringplek gehad en sy't begin om my alles van die goeieplek te vertel. Dáár, het sy gesê, loop mens net heeldag met 'n harp rond en sing aanmekaar. Ek het nie veel sin daarin gehad nie, maar ek het my mond gehou. Ek het haar net gevra of sy gedink het Tom Sawyer sou daar uitkom, en sy't gesê hy't nie 'n kat se kans nie. Daaroor was ek in my skik, want ek wou graag hê ek en hy moes bymekaar bly.

Juffrou Watson het ál op my bly pik en op die duur het dit mens verveeld en eensaam laat voel. Later het hulle die negerslawe binnegeroep vir huisgodsdien en daarna is almal bed toe. Ek het met 'n stukkie kers opgegaan na my kamer en dit op die tafel neergesit. Toe het ek in 'n stoel by die venster gaan sit en probeer om aan iets aangenaams te dink, maar aikona. Ek het so allenig gevoel dat ek wraggies amper gewens het ek was dood. Die sterre het geskitter en die blare het so vreeslik treurig in die bosse geritsel; en verweg het ek 'n uil gehoor, hoe-hoe oor iemand wat dood is, en 'n nagvoël, en 'n hond wat tjank oor iemand anders wat nog gáán doodgaan; en die wind het iets vir my probeer fluister en ek kon nie uitmaak wát nie, en dit het koue rillings teen my rug afgeja. Toe het ek diep in die bosse die soort geluid gehoor wat 'n spook maak as hy iets wil vertel wat op sy gewete rus, maar nie kán nie; en daarom kan hy nie rustig in sy graf bly lê nie, maar dwaal nagtelank so rond, en kerm. Ek het so bang en neerslagtig geraak dat ek regtig begin wens het ek het geselskap. Net toe het 'n spinnekop teen my skouer opgekrui; ek het hom daar afgeskiet en hy't in die kers aan die brand geraak. Voor ek 'n lid kon verroer, was hy skoon verskrompel. Dit was vir niemand nodig om my te vertel dat dit 'n deksels slegte teken was en dat dit my in die ongeluk sou dompel nie; dus was ek so bang dat ek amper die klere van my bas af gebewe het. Ek het opgestaan, drie keer kortom gedraai en elke keer 'n kruisteken oor my bors gemaak; daarna het ek 'n paar van my hare met 'n garingdraad vasebind om die hekse weg te hou. Maar ek het nog steeds onrustig gevoel. Sien, dis mos wat mens doen as jy 'n hoefyster gekry en weer verloor het in plaas van om dit bokant jou deur vas te spyker; maar ek het nog nooit gehoor dat dit juis ongeluk van mens kon weghou ná jy 'n spinnekop doodgemaak het nie.

Bewerig het ek maar weer gaan sit en my pyp uitgehaal om te rook, want die huis was nou so stil soos 'n grafkelder en die weduwee sou nie weet wat ek doen nie. Ná 'n lang ruk hoor ek die horlosie doer van die dorp af slaan: boem-boem-boem, twaalf keer; en toe's dit weer stil, stiller as ooit tevore. Net daarna hoor ek 'n takkie kraak, daar onder in die donker tussen die bome. Daar beweeg iemand. Ek bly doodstil sit en luister. Dadelik hoor ek die amper onhoorbare „*miaau-miaau!*” daar onder. Gaaf! „*Miaau, miaau!*” gee ek antwoord, so saggies as ek kan. En ek blaas die kers dood en glip by die venster uit op die skuur se dak. Daarvandaan gly ek grond toe en sluip tussen die bome in, na waar Tom Sawyer vir my wag.

SECTION 2

We went tip-toeing along a path amongst the trees back towards the end of the widow's garden, stooping down so as the branches wouldn't scrape our heads. When we was passing by the kitchen I fell over a root and made a noise. We scrouched down and laid still. Miss Watson's big nigger, named Jim^{e1}, was setting in the kitchen door; we could see him pretty clear, because there was a light behind him. He got up and stretched his neck out about a minute, listening. Then he says,

"Who dah?"

He listened some more; then he come tip-toeing down and stood right between us; we could a touched him, nearly. Well, likely it was minutes and minutes that there warn't a sound, and we all there so close together. There was a place on my ankle that got to itching; but I dasn't scratch it; and then my ear begun to itch; and next my back, right between my shoulders. Seemed like I'd die if I couldn't scratch^{e2}. Well, I've noticed that thing plenty of times since. If you are with the quality, or at a funeral, or trying to go to sleep when you ain't sleepy—if you are anywheres where it won't do for you to scratch, why you will itch all over in upwards of a thousand places. Pretty soon Jim says:

"Say—who is you? Whar is you? Dog my cats ef I didn' hear sumf'n. Well, I knows what I's gwyne to do. I's gwyne to set down here and listen tell I hears it agin."

So he set down on the ground betwixt me and Tom. He leaned his back up against a tree, and stretched his legs out till one of them most touched one of mine. My nose begun to itch. It itched till the tears come into my eyes. But I dasn't scratch. Then it begun to itch on the inside. Next I got to itching underneath. I didn't know how I was going to set still. This miserableness went on as much as six or seven minutes; but it seemed a sight longer than that. I was itching in eleven different places now. I reckoned I couldn't stand it more'n a minute longer, but I set my teeth hard and got ready to try. Just then Jim begun to breathe heavy; next he begun to snore—and then I was pretty soon comfortable again.

Tom he made a sign to me—kind of a little noise with his mouth—and we went creeping away on our hands and knees. When we was ten foot off, Tom whispered to me and wanted to tie Jim to the tree for fun; but I said no; he might wake and make a disturbance, and then they'd find out I warn't in. Then Tom said he hadn't got candles enough, and he would slip in the kitchen and get some more. I didn't want him to try. I said Jim might wake up and come. But Tom wanted to resk it; so we slid in there and got three candles, and Tom laid five cents on the table for pay. Then we got out, and I was in a sweat to get away; but nothing would do Tom but he must crawl to where Jim was, on his hands and knees, and play something on him. I waited, and it seemed a good while, everything was so still and lonesome.

As soon as Tom was back, we cut along the path, around the garden fence, and by-and-by fetched up on the steep top of the hill the other side of the house.

Tom said he slipped Jim's hat off of his head and hung it on a limb right over him, and Jim stirred a little, but he didn't wake. Afterwards Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by-and-by he said they rode him all over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back was all over saddle-boils. Jim was monstrous proud about it, and he got so he wouldn't hardly notice the other niggers. Niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked up to than any nigger in that country. Strange niggers would stand with their mouths open and look him all over, same as if he was a wonder. Niggers is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen fire; but whenever one was talking and letting on to know all about such things, Jim would happen in and say, "Hm! What you know 'bout witches?" and that nigger was corked up and had to take a back seat. Jim always kept that five-center piece around his neck with a string and said it was a charm the devil give to him with his own hands and told him he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to, just by saying something to it; but he never told what it was he said to it. Niggers would come from all around there and give Jim anything they had, just for a sight of that five-center piece; but they wouldn't touch it, because the devil had had his hands on it. Jim was most ruined, for a servant, because he got so stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches.

Well, when Tom and me got to the edge of the hill-top, we looked away down into the village^{e3} and could see three or four lights twinkling, where there was sick folks, may be; and the stars over us was sparkling ever so fine; and down by the village was the river, a whole mile broad, and awful still and grand. We went down the hill and found Jo Harper, and Ben Rogers, and two or three more of the boys, hid in the old tanyard. So we unhitched a skiff and pulled down the river two mile and a half, to the big scar on the hillside, and went ashore.

We went to a clump of bushes, and Tom made everybody swear to keep the secret, and then showed them a hole in the hill, right in the thickest part of the bushes. Then we lit the candles and crawled in on our hands and knees. We went about two hundred yards, and then the cave^{e4} opened up. Tom poked about amongst the passages and pretty soon ducked under a wall where you wouldn't a noticed that there was a hole. We went along a narrow place and got into a kind of room, all damp and sweaty and cold, and there we stopped. Tom says:

"Now we'll start this band of robbers and call it Tom Sawyer's Gangⁱ⁶. Everybody that wants to join has got to take an oath^{e15}, and write his name in blood."

Everybody was willing. So Tom got out a sheet of paper that he had wrote the oath on, and read it. It swore every boy to stick to the band, and never tell any of the secrets; and if anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person and his family must do it, and he mustn't eat and he mustn't sleep till he had killed them and

hacked a cross in their breasts^{e6}, which was the sign of the band. And nobody that didn't belong to the band could use that mark, and if he did he must be sued; and if he done it again he must be killed. And if anybody that belonged to the band told the secrets, he must have his throat cut, and then have his carcass burnt up and the ashes scattered all around, and his name blotted off of the list with blood and never mentioned again by the gang, but have a curse put on it and be forgot, forever.

Everybody said it was a real beautiful oath, and asked Tom if he got it out of his own head. He said, some of it, but the rest was out of pirate books, and robber books, and every gang that was high-toned had it.

Some thought it would be good to kill the *families* of boys that told the secrets. Tom said it was a good idea, so he took a pencil and wrote it in. Then Ben Rogers says:

“Here’s Huck Finn, he hain’t got no family—what you going to do ’bout him?”

“Well, hain’t he got a father?” says Tom Sawyer.

“Yes, he’s got a father, but you can’t never find him, these days. He used to lay drunk with the hogs^{e7} in the tanyard, but he hain’t been seen in these parts for a year or more.”

They talked it over, and they was going to rule me out, because they said every boy must have a family or somebody to kill, or else it wouldn’t be fair and square for the others. Well, nobody could think of anything to do—everybody was stumped, and set still. I was most

ready to cry; but all at once I thought of a way, and so I offered them Miss Watson—they could kill her. Everybody said:

“Oh, she’ll do, she’ll do. That’s all right. Huck can come in.”

Then they all stuck a pin in their fingers to get blood to sign with, and I made my mark on the paper.

“Now,” says Ben Rogers, “what’s the line of business of this Gang?”

“Nothing only robbery and murder,” Tom said.

“But who are we going to rob? houses—or cattle—or _____”

“Stuff! stealing cattle and such things ain’t robbery, it’s burglary,” says Tom Sawyer. “We ain’t burglars. That ain’t no sort of style^{e8}. We are highwaymen. We stop stages and carriages on the road, with masks on, and kill the people and take their watches and money.”

“Must we always kill the people?”

“Oh, certainly. It’s best. Some authorities think different, but mostly it’s considered best to kill them. Except some that you bring to the cave here and keep them till they’re ransomed.”

“Ransomed? What’s that?”

“I don’t know.^{e9} But that’s what they do. I’ve seen it in books; and so of course that’s what we’ve got to do.”

“But how can we do it if we don’t know what it is?”

“Why blame it all, we’ve *got* to do it. Don’t I tell you it’s in the books? Do you want to go to doing different from what’s in the books, and get things all muddled up?”

“Oh, that’s all very fine to say, Tom Sawyer, but how in the nation^{e28} are these fellows going to be ransomed if we don’t know how to do it to them? that’s the thing I want to get at. Now what do you *reckon* it is?”

“Well I don’t know. But per’aps if we keep them till they’re ransomed, it means that we keep them till they’re dead.”

“Now, that’s something *like*. That’ll answer. Why couldn’t you said that before? We’ll keep them till they’re ransomed to death—and a bothersome lot they’ll be, too, eating up everything and always trying to get loose.”

“How you talk, Ben Rogers. How can they get loose when there’s a guard over them, ready to shoot them down if they move a peg?”

“A guard. Well, that *is* good. So somebody’s got to set up all night and never get any sleep, just so as to watch them. I think that’s foolishness. Why can’t a body take a club and ransom them as soon as they get here?”

“Because it ain’t in the books so—that’s why. Now Ben Rogers, do you want to do things regular, or don’t you?—that’s the idea. Don’t you reckon that the people that made the books knows what’s the correct thing to do? Do you reckon *you* can learn ’em anything? Not by a good deal. No, sir, we’ll just go on and ransom them in the regular way.”

“All right. I don’t mind; but I say it’s a fool way, anyhow. Say—do we kill the women, too?”

“Well, Ben Rogers, if I was as ignorant as you I wouldn’t let on. Kill the women? No—nobody ever saw anything in the books like that. You fetch them to the cave, and you’re always as polite as pie to them; and by-and-by they fall in love with you and never want to go home any more.”

“Well, if that’s the way, I’m agreed, but I don’t take no stock in it. Mighty soon we’ll have the cave so cluttered up with women, and fellows waiting to be ransomed, that there won’t be no place for the robbers. But go ahead, I ain’t got nothing to say.”

Little Tommy Barnes was asleep, now, and when they waked him up he was scared, and cried, and said he wanted to go home to his ma, and didn’t want to be a robber any more.

So they all made fun of him, and called him cry-baby, and that made him mad, and he said he would go straight and tell all the secrets. But Tom give him five cents to keep quiet, and said we would all go home and meet next week and rob somebody and kill some people.

Ben Rogers said he couldn’t get out much, only Sundays, and so he wanted to begin next Sunday; but all the boys said it would be wicked to do it on Sunday, and that settled the thing. They agreed to get together and fix a day as soon as they could, and then we elected Tom Sawyer first captain and Jo Harper second captain of the Gang, and so started home^{e11}.

I clumb up the shed and crept into my window just before day was breaking. My new clothes was all greased up and clayey, and I was dog-tired.

Chapter 2

Op ons tone volg ons 'n paadjie al tussen die bome deur tot by die onderpunt van die weduwee se tuin. Mens moet die hele tyd gebukkend loop sodat die takke nie jou kop vang nie. Net toe ons by die kombuis verbykom, struikel ek oor 'n wortel en tuimel met 'n groot geraas neer. 'n Ruk lank bly ons laag teen die grond hurk en wag. Juffrou Watson se groot neger, Jim, het daar in die kombuisdeur gesit—ons kon hom baie goed sien, want daar was 'n lig agter hom. Hy't opgestaan en omtrent 'n minuut lank met sy nek uitgestrek bly staan en luister. Toe vra hy: „Wie's daar?”

Nog 'n rukkie luister hy. Toe kom hy op sy tone nader en bly tussen ons staan—so naby dat ons amper aan hom kan raak. Dit moet minute lank gewees het dat ons al drie daar so digby mekaar was sonder om die geringste geluidjie te maak. Aan my enkel het daar iets begin jeuk, maar ek durf dit nie krap nie; toe was dit weer my oor wat begin jeuk; toe my rug, hier mooi tussen my skouerblaie. Dit het later gevoel asof ek sou doodgaan as ek nie kon krap nie. Dis iets wat ek dikwels daarna weer opgemerk het: as jy saam met deftige mense is, of by 'n begrafnis, of jy probeer slaap as jy nie vaak is nie . . . wáár jy nou ook al is waar jy jou nie mag krap nie, daar jeuk jy op 'n duisend plekke gelyk.

Na 'n rukkie praat Jim weer: „Haai, wie's daar?” vra hy. „Wáár's jy ? Slaat my dood as ek niks gehoor het nie. Maar ek weet wat ek gaan doen: ek gaan net hier bly sit tot ek dit weer hoor.”

En daar gaan sit hy toe plat op die grond, reg tussen my en Tom, met sy rug geleun teen 'n boomstam en sy bene gestrek tot een van hulle so hittete aan myne raak. My neus het begin jeuk. En dit het só gejeuk dat daar naderhand trane ín my oë was. Maar ek het nie durf waag om te krap nie. Toe begin dit aan die binnekant jeuk. En later begin ek ónderlangs jeuk tot ek nie meer weet hoe om stil te sit nie. Dié ellende het seker 'n goeie ses of sewe minute lank aangehou, maar dit het nog veel langer gevoel. Teen dié tyd het ek op elf ver- skillende plekke gejeuk. Dit het gevoel of ek nou nie meer 'n oomblik langer kon uithou nie, maar ek het op my tande gebyt en besluit om te probeer. Net toe begin Jim swaarder asemhaal, 'n oomblik later gaan hy aan die snork en in 'n japtrap kon ek weer gemaklik voel.

Tom het my 'n teken gegee—'n soort geluidjie met sy mond—en

hande viervoet het ons daarvandaan weggekruip. So 'n tien tree weg het Tom die plan gekry om net vir die grap vir Jim daar teen die boom te gaan vasbind, maar ek het hom gekeer. Jim kon dalk wakker word en 'n lawaai opskop, en dan sou hulle gou uitvind dat ek nie in my kamer is nie.

Daarop het Tom ontdek dat hy nie genoeg kerse het nie en hy wou opsluit terug kombuis toe om nog te gaan haal. Ek wou nie daarvan hoor nie, want sê nou Jim word wakker en kom ondersoek instel? Maar Tom wou dit nou eenmaal waag, daarom het ons tog maar teruggesluip en drie kerse vasgelê, en Tom het vyf sent daar op die tafel gelos as betaling. Toe's ons weer uit buitentoe en nou wou ek so gou as moontlik wegkom, maar aan Tom was daar nie salf te smeer nie: hy móés eers hande viervoet tot by Jim terugkruip en daar 'n poets op hom gaan bak. Ek het gewag en dit het na 'n baie lang ruk gelyk, so stil en eensaam was alles.

Net toe Tom eindelijk opdaag, glip ons in die paadjie af, steek buite om die tuinheining verby en beland op die hoë top van die heuwel aan die anderkant van die huis. Tom het vertel dat hy Jim se hoed van sy kop afgegaps en dit aan die tak net bokant hom opgehang het; Jim het glo effens geroer, maar nie wakker geword nie. Later het Jim vertel dat die hekse hom getoor en in 'n beswyming laat val het; daarna het hulle hom deur die hele provinsie geneem, hom oplaas weer onder die borne kom terugsit en sy hoed aan die tak opgehang om te wys wie dit gedoen het. En die volgende keer toe Jim die storie vertel het, het hy gesê dat hulle hom tot by New Orleans geneem het; en daarna het hy dit elke keer 'n entjie verder gerek tot- dat hy naderhand vertel het dat hy oor die hele wêreld geneem is en dat hy skoon poot-uit teruggekom het, met sy rug die ene blare van die saal waarop die hekse gery het. Jim was verskriklik trots daarop en het sy neus vir alle ander negers begin optrek. Negers het myle ver gekom om Jim te hoor vertel en hy was die mees gesogte neger in die hele kontrei. Vreemdelinge het hom oopmond staan en aangaap, asof hy 'n soort wonderwerk was. Sien, negers praat mos altyd oor hekse as hulle in die donker by die kombuisvuur sit; maar nes een begin praat het en gemaak het asof hy alles van sulke dinge weet, sou Jim daar aankom en sê: „Gmf! Wa' weet jy miskien van hekse?” En dan sou die verteller heeltemal druipstert tussen die agterstes gaan sit.

Jim het altyd daardie vyfsentstukkies aan 'n toutjie om sy nek bly dra en gesê dit was 'n toording wat die duiwel hom met sy eie hande gegee het. Met die ding, het die duiwel glo gesê, kon hy enigiemand gesond maak en enige tyd die hekse oproep deur bloot vir die ding iets te sê. Maar wát hy daarvoor gesê het, het hy nooit vertel nie. Van oral uit die buurt het negers gekom en Jim enigiets aangebied net om 'n slag na die vyfsentstuk te kyk; maar hulle het dit nooit met 'n vinger aangeraak nie, want die duiwel het dit mos in sy hande gehad. As 'n bediende was dit amper klaarpraat met Jim, so hoogmoedig het hy geword omdat hy die duiwel gesien het en omdat die hekse op hom gery het.

Maar nouja; toe ek en Tom daar teen die bokant van die heuwel uitkom,

kon ons ver oor die dorpie uitkyk. Drie, vier liggies het nog geknipooog, scker waar daar siek mense was, en bokant ons het die sterre so mooi soos mooi geskitter; en onder teen die dorpie was daar die rivier, 'n hele myl breed en vreeslik stil en bleek.

Ons het teen die heuwel afgeklouter na die ou leerlooierswerf waar Joe Harper, Ben Rogers en 'n paar ander kêrels aan die skuil was. Saam het ons 'n skuit losgemaak, twee en 'n half myl ver stroomaf gevaar, tot by die diep skeur in die heuwel, en daar aan wal gestap.

Daar het ons na 'n digte boskasie gegaan. Tom het ons eers laat sweer om alles geheim te hou en die ouens toe 'n gat daar in die middel van die klomp bosse gewys. Ons het kerse aangesteek en hande viervoet ingeklouter. So 'n tweehonderd tree ver het ons aan- gesukkel, tot die grot begin wyer word het. Daar het Tom so 'n bietjie tussen die gangetjies gesoek-soek en skielik onder 'n muur in verdwyn waar mens nooit sou verwag om 'n gat te kry nie. Al met 'n noutetjie langs is ons verder, tot in 'n soort kamer—klam en sweterig en koud—waar ons tot stilstand gekom het.

„Nou kan ons ons rowerbende stig,” sê Tom. „Ons noem dit ,Tom Sawyer se bende'. Almal wat wil aansluit, moet eers 'n eed aflê en dan sy naam in bloed teken.”

Almal was gewillig, dus het Tom die stuk papier waarop hy die eed neergeskryf het, uitgehaal en dit aan ons voorgelees. Elke seun moes belowe om getrou te bly aan die bende en nooit enige geheim te ver- klap nie; as enigiemand iets teen 'n bendelid doen, dan moes daardie man en sy familie doodgemaak word. En die bendelid aan wie dié taak opgedra word, mag nie weier nie, en hy mag ook nie eet of slaap voor hy die mense vermoor en 'n kruisteken op hul borse uitgesny het nie (dit was die bende se teken). Niemand buite die bende mag dié teken gebruik nie—en die een wat dit wél doen, moet gedagvaar word; en as hy dit 'n tweede keer doen, moet hy doodgemaak word. En as enige bendelid 'n geheim uitblaker, moet sy keel afgesny, sy liggaam verbrand en die as oral uitgestrooi word, en sy naam moet met bloed uit die ledelys uitgewis word en die bende mag nooit weer van hom praat nie; daar moet vir ewig en altyd 'n vloek op hom ge- plaas word sodat almal van hom kan vergeet.

Ons het almal gedink dis 'n pragtige eed en vir Tom gevra of hy dit self uitgedink het. Hy't gesê party van die goed was sy eie idees, maar die res kom uit seerower- en struikrowerboeke. Alle bendes wat hul sout werd is, het hy gesê, het dié eed.

'n Paar het gemeen dat ook die families van verklikkers vermoor moet word. Tom het dit 'n goeie plan gevind en dit met 'n potlood bygevoeg.

Maar toe sê Ben Rogers: „Maar wat van Huck Finn ?—Hy't tog g'n familie nie!”

„Hy't tog 'n pa!” kap Tom Sawyer teë.

„Ja, hy hét 'n pa, maar mens kan hom deesdae nêrens kry nie. Gewoonlik het hy daar in die leerlooier se werf tussen die varke dronk gelê, maar

dis nou al 'n jaar dat niemand hom met 'n oog hier in die buurt gesien het nie."

Hulle het die saak bespreek en amper-amper besluit om my uit te laat, want bulle't gesê elke seun moet 'n familie of iemand hê om ver- moor te word, anders sou dit nie regverdig teenoor die ander wees nie. Niemand kon enige uitweg prakseer nie; almal was in 'n hoek; en ek was so waar lus om te begin grens. Maar toe dink ek skielik aan 'n oplossing en ek stel juffrou Watson voor: vir háár kon buile maar doodmaak.

„O já!” het almal ingewillig. „Sy's doodreg. Dis net gaaf. Huck kan dan ook aansluit."

Daarop het elkeen 'n speld in sy vingertop gesteek om bloed te kry. om hul name mee te teken, en ek het *my* merk ook gemaak.

„Nou toe,” wil Ben Rogers weet: „Wat gaan die bende nou eintlik aanvang?”

„Niks,” antwoord Tom. „Net moord en rowery.”

„Maar wat gaan ons steel? Huise? Of Vee? Of. .

„Twak! Veestelery en sulke goed is g'n rowery nie,” sê Tom Sawyer. „Ons is nie inbrekers nie. Inbrekers is lae skurke. Ons is struikrowers. Ons gaan koetse en waens op die grootpad voorkeer, met maskers aan, en die mense doodmaak, en hulle geld en horlosies steel.”

„Moet ons altyd die mense doodmaak?”

„Natuurlik. Dis die beste. Party deskundiges het ander menings oor die saak, maar die gewone opinie is dat moord die beste ding is. Behalwe nou dié wat mens hier na die grot toe kan bring as gyselaars totdat 'n losprys aangebied word.”

„Gyselaars? Watse goed is dit?”

„Weet'ie. Maar dis wat gebeur. Ek het in boeke daarvan gelees en dus gaan ons dit doen.”

„Maar hoe kan ons dit doen as ons nie weet wat dit is nie?”

„Maar gedorie, ons *moet* dit doen! Ek het jou mos gesê dit staan in boeke. Wil jy nou iets gaan doen wat *nie* in die boeke staan nie en alles gaan opmors ?”

„Dis alles baie maklik *gesê*, Tom Sawyer, maar hoe de joos gaan mens gyselaars van die spul maak as ons nie weet hóé om dit te doen nie ? Dis wat ék wil weet. Nou toe: wat *dink* jy is dit ?”

„Wel ek weet nie. As ons hulle as gyselaars hou, dan beteken dit miskien ons hou hulle tot hulle doodgaan.”

„Nou *sê* jy mos iets! Dit klink goed. Hoekom het jy dit nie lankal gesê nie? Ons hou hulle tot hulle doodgegysel is. En dit gaan 'n ver- vlaks lastige spul wees, want hulle sal alles opeet en gedurig probeer wegkom.”

„Hemel; maar jy kan darem praat, Ben Rogers! Hoe kan hulle wegvlug as daar 'n wag by hulle is, gereed om hulle plat te skiet nes hulle 'n duim verroer?”

„'n Wag. Nou dít klink uitstekend. Wil jy my sê iemand bly die hele nag

sonder slaap net om na hulle te kyk? Ek dink dis twak. Hoe- kom kan mens nie 'n knuppel vat en hulle doodgysel nes hulle hier aankom nie ?”

„Omdat dit nie so in die boeke staan nie—dis hoekom. Kyk, Ben Rogers, sê nou vir my reguit: wil jy dinge doen soos dit hoort, of wil jy nie? Dink jy nie die mense wat die boeke maak, wéét wat die regte ding is nie ? Dink jy miskien jy kan hulle iets leer ? Dan't jy dit mis. Nee, ou maat, ons gaan hulle net eenvoudig op die regte manier gysel.”

„Orraait. Dit traak my nie. Maar ek sê nóg dis 'n verspotte idee. Haai lui: moet ons die vroumense ook doodmaak ?”

„Kyk, Ben Rogers, as ek so onnosel soos jy was, sou ek probeer het om ander mense dit nie te laat agterkom nie. Vroumense doodmaak ? Nooit. Dis iets ongehoords in al die boeke. Jy bring hulle grot toe en sorg dat jy altyd so hoflik is as kan kom; en so al gaande word hulle verlief op jou en dan wil hulle nooit weer teruggaan huis toe nie.”

„Nou goed, as dit dan die geval is, sal ek maar so maak—maar ek vertrou die saak nog glad nie. Een van die dae is die grot so vol vroumense geprop dat daar nie meer plek vir rowers is nie. Maar maak soos jy lekker kry; ek het niks meer te sê nie.”

Teen dié tyd was klein Tommy Barnes al vas aan die slaap en toe hulle hom wakker maak, was hy so bang dat hy aan die huil geraak het. Hy't bly skree hy wil teruggaan huis toe na sy ma toe en hy wil nie meer 'n rower wees nie. Toe't ons hom almal gespot en gesê hy's 'n ou huilbalie. En dit het hom so smoorkwaad gemaak dat hy ge- dreig het om daar en dan al ons geheime te gaan uitlap. Maar Tom het hom vyf sent gegee om sy mond te hou, en daarna voorgestel dat ons maar almal teruggaan huis toe. Die volgende week, het hy gesê, sou ons weer bymekaarkom en iemand beroof en 'n paar mense doodmaak.

Ben Rogers het gesê hy kan nie dikwels wegkom nie, net Sondae, en hy wou toe hê ons moet die volgende Sondag begin, maar al die **ander** het gemeen dis 'n gemene soort ding om op Sondag te doen, **en** daarmee was die saak afgehandel. Ons het afgespreek om so gou **as** moontlik op 'n dag te besluit; daama het ons Tom Sawyer as die **bende** se eerste kaptein gekies en Joe Harper as onderkaptein, en toe is ons terug huis toe.

Ek het teen die skuur uitgeklouter en net voor dagbreek weer deur my kamervenster geklim. My nuwe klere was besmeer en die ene modder en ek was poot-uit van die moeg.

SECTION 3

Well, I got a good going-over in the morning, from old Miss Watson, on account of my clothes; but the widow she didn't scold, but only cleaned off the grease and clay and looked so sorry that I thought I would behave a while if I could. Then Miss Watson she took me in the closet⁴ and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn't so. I tried it. Once I got a fish-line, but no hooks. It warn't any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but somehow I couldn't make it work^{e1}. By-and-by, one day, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn't make it out no way.

I set down, one time, back in the woods, and had a long think about it. I says to myself, if a body can get anything they pray for, why don't Deacon Winn get back the money he lost on pork? Why can't the widow get back her silver snuff-box that was stole? Why can't Miss Watson fat up? No, says I to myself, there ain't nothing in it. I went and told the widow about it, and she said the thing a body could get by praying for it was "spiritual gifts." This was too many for me, but she told me what she meant—I must help other people, and do everything I could for other people, and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself. This was including Miss Watson, as I took it. I went out in the woods and turned it over in my mind a long time, but I couldn't see no advantage about it—except for the other people—so at last I reckoned I wouldn't

worry about it any more, but just let it go. Sometimes the widow would take me one side and talk about Providence in a way to make a body's mouth water; but maybe next day Miss Watson would take hold and knock it all down again. I judged I could see that there was two Providences, and a poor chap would stand considerable show with the widow's Providence, but if Miss Watson's got him there warn't no help for him any more. I thought it all out, and reckoned I would belong to the widow's, if he wanted me, though I couldn't make out how he was agoing to be any better off then than what he was before, seeing I was so ignorant and so kind of low-down and ornery.

Pap he hadn't been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn't want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me; though I used to take to the woods most of the time when he was around. Well, about this time he was found in the river drowned, about twelve mile above town, so people said. They judged it was him, anyway; said this drowned man was just his size, and was ragged, and had uncommon long hair—which was all like pap—but they couldn't make nothing out of the face, because it had been in the water so long it warn't much like a face at all. They said he was floating on his back in the water. They took him and buried him on the bank. But I warn't comfortable long, because I happened to think of something. I knowed mighty well that a drowned man don't float on his back, but on his face^{e2}. So I knowed, then, that this warn't pap, but a woman dressed up in a man's clothes. So I was uncomfortable again. I judged the old man would turn up again by-

and-by, though I wished he wouldn't.

We played robber now and then about a month, and then I resigned. All the boys did. We hadn't robbed nobody, we hadn't killed any people, but only just pretended. We used to hop out of the woods and go charging down on hog-drovers and women in carts taking garden stuff to market, but we never hived⁵ any of them. Tom Sawyer called the hogs "ingots," and he called the turnips and stuff "julery" and we would go to the cave and pow-wow over what we had done and how many people we had killed and marked. But I couldn't see no profit in it. One time Tom sent a boy to run about town with a blazing stick^{e3}, which he called a slogan⁶ (which was the sign for the Gang to get together), and then he said he had got secret news by his spies that next day a whole parcel of Spanish merchants and rich A-rabs was going to camp in Cave Hollow^{e4} with two hundred elephants, and six hundred camels, and over a thousand "sumter" mules, all loaded down with di'monds, and they didn't have only a guard of four hundred soldiers, and so we would lay in ambuscade, as he called it, and kill the lot and scoop the things. He said we must slick up our swords and guns, and get ready. He never could go after even a turnip-cart but he must have the swords and guns all scoured up for it; though they was only lath and broom-sticks, and you might scour at them till you rotted and then they warn't worth a mouthful of ashes more than what they was before. I didn't believe we could lick such a crowd of Spaniards and A-rabs, but I wanted to see the camels and elephants, so I was on hand next day, Saturday, in the ambuscade; and when we got the word, we rushed out of the woods and

down the hill. But there warn't no Spaniards and A-rabs, and there warn't no camels nor no elephants. It warn't anything but a Sunday-school picnic, and only a primer-class at that. We busted it up, and chased the children up the hollow; but we never got anything but some doughnuts and jam, though Ben Rogers got a rag doll, and Jo Harper got a hymn-book and a tract; and then the teacher charged in and made us drop everything and cut. I didn't see no di'monds, and I told Tom Sawyer so. He said there was loads of them there, anyway; and he said there was A-rabs there, too, and elephants and things. I said, why couldn't we see them, then? He said if I warn't so ignorant, but had read a book called "Don Quixote,"^{e5} I would know without asking. He said it was all done by enchantment^{e6}. He said there was hundreds of soldiers there, and elephants and treasure, and so on, but we had enemies which he called magicians, and they had turned the whole thing into an infant Sunday school, just out of spite. I said, all right, then the thing for us to do was to go for the magicians. Tom Sawyer said I was a numskull.

"Why," says he, "a magician could call up a lot of genies, and they would hash you up like nothing before you could say Jack Robinson^{e7}. They are as tall as a tree and as big around as a church."

"Well," I says, "s'pose we got some genies to help *us*—can't we lick the other crowd then?"

"How you going to get them?"

"I don't know. How do *they* get them?"

"Why they rub an old tin lamp^{e8} or an iron ring, and

then the genies come tearing in, with the thunder and lightning a-ripping around and the smoke a-rolling, and everything they're told to do they up and do it. They don't think nothing of pulling a shot tower^{e9} up by the roots, and belting a Sunday-school superintendent over the head with it—or any other man.”

“Who makes them tear around so?”

“Why, whoever rubs the lamp or the ring. They belong to whoever rubs the lamp or the ring, and they've got to do whatever he says. If he tells them to build a palace forty miles long, out of di'monds, and fill it full of chewing gum, or whatever you want, and fetch an emperor's daughter from China for you to marry, they've got to do it—and they've got to do it before sun-up next morning, too. And more—they've got to waltz that palace around over the country wherever you want it, you understand.”

“Well,” says I, “I think they are a pack of flatheads for not keeping the palace themselves 'stead of fooling them away like that. And what's more—if I was one of them I would see a man in Jericho^{e10} before I would drop my business and come to him for the rubbing of an old tin lamp.”

“How you talk, Huck Finn. Why, you'd *have* to come when he rubbed it, whether you wanted to or not.”

“What, and I as high as a tree and as big as a church? All right, then; I *would* come; but I lay I'd make that man climb the highest tree there was in the country.”

“Shucks, it ain't no use to talk to you, Huck Finn. You don't seem to know anything, somehow—perfect sap-

head.”

I thought all this over for two or three days, and then I reckoned I would see if there was anything in it. I got an old tin lamp and an iron ring and went out in the woods and rubbed and rubbed till I sweat like an Injun^{i7e11}, calculating to build a palace and sell it; but it warn't no use, none of the genies come^{e12}. So then I judged that all that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer's lies. I reckoned he believed in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me I think different. It had all the marks of a Sunday school.

Chapter 3

Nou ja, die volgende more het ou juffrou

Watson my laat les opse oor my klere, maar die weduwee het nie ge- raas nie. Sy't net al die gemors van my klere afgewas en so treurig gelyk dat ek by myself besluit het om my nou 'n rukkiet te gedra as ek dit kon regkry. Toe het juffrou Watson my na haar kamer toe geneem en gebid, maar dit het nie juis gehelp nie. Sy't my aangeraai om elke dag te bid en gesê ek sou kry net wat ek vra. Maar dit was nie so nie, Ek het probeer. Een keer het ek 'n vislyn gekry, maar g'n hoeke nie. en sonder hoeke was dit vir my niks werd. Drie of vier keer het ek toe probeer bid vir hoeke, maar dit wou nie werk nie. Naderhand het ek juffrou Watson gevra om te probeer, maar sy't net gesê ek is mal. Waarom, het sy my nooit gesê nie, en ek kon dit ook nooit uitvind nie.

Op 'n dag het ek in die bosse gaan sit en goed daaroor nagedink. Kyk, het ek vir myself gesê, as mens enigiets kan kry waarvoor jy bid, vir wat kry ouderling Winn nie die geld terug wat hy op kaarte ver- loor nie? Hoekom het die weduwee nooit haar silwer snuifdoos teruggekry wat gesteel was nie? Hoekom word juffrou Watson nooit 'n slag vet nie? Nee, het ek besluit, dis alles nonsens. Ek het toe met die weduwee daaroor gaan praat en sy't gesê dat 'n mens eintlik moet bid vir „geestelike gawes”. Dit was bo my vuurmaakplek, maar sy't my vertel wat sy bedoel: ek moes ander mense help, en alles wat ek kon vir ander doen, en altyd na hulle belange omsien en nooit aan myself dink nie. Dit het juffrou Watson ingesluit, soos ek die saak verstaan het. Ek het teruggegaan bos toe en lank daaroor gedink, maar ek kon g'n nut in die hele ding sien nie—behalwe vir ander mense—en oplaas het ek

toe maar besluit om my nie verder daaraan te steur nie en die saak maar sy gang laat gaan.

Partykeer het die weduwee my opsy geneem en oor die Voorsienigheid gepraat op 'n manier wat mens se mond laat water het; maar dan sou juffrou Watson my weer die volgende dag pak en alles op-foeter. Dit het vir my begin lyk asof daar eintlik twee Voorsienighede bestaan: 'n arme ou kon nogal heelwat baat by die weduwee se Voor-sienigheid, maar as juffrou Watson s'n hom in die hande kry, is daar g'n hoop vir hom nie. Ek het dit toe goed gepraat en besluit dat ek aan die weduwee s'n sou behoort, as hy my wou hê, al kon ek nie juis sien hoedat hy daar enigiets beter aan toe sou wees as tevore nie, want ek was so onnosel en so half gopserig en doodgewoon.

Ek het Pa vir meer as 'n jaar nooit gesien nie, en ek was nogal bly daarvoor want ek *wou* hom nie weer sien nie. Hy't die gewoonte gehad om my te looi nes hy nugter was en my in die hande kon kry—al het ek gewoonlik gemaak dat ek iewers in die bosse beland wanneer hy in die omtrek was. Nou, dit was ongeveer die tyd toe hy so 'n twaalf myl bokant die dorp uit die rivier gehaal is—verdrink. Dis wat die mense vertel het. Hulle't gemeen dit moet hy wees, want die verdrinkte ou was net so groot soos hy, en was die ene vodde en het buitengewoon lang hare gehad—Pa uitgeknip—maar van die gesig kon hulle niks uitmaak nie, want teen die tyd het hy so lank in die water gedrywe dat dit nie meer veel na 'n gesig gelyk het nie. Hulle het vertel dat hy op sy rug in die water gedryf het. Hulle't hom uitgesleep en teen die wal begrawe. Maar ek het nie baie lank gerus gevoel nie, want iets het my skielik bygeval: ek het mos alte goed geweet 'n verdrinkte man dryf nie op sy rug nie, maar op sy gesigkant. Dié ou was dus nié my pa nie, maar 'n vroumens in mansklere. Gevolglik het ek weer bekommerd begin raak. Vroeër of later sou die oukêrel weer sy op-wagting maak, dit het ek geweet, hoe ek ook al gewens het hy bly liewerster weg.

So 'n maand lank het ons af en toe rowers gespeel, maar toe het ek bedank. Al die ander ook. Ons het niemand besteel nie en niemand doodgemaak nie, maar net kamma-kamma so gemaak. Gewoonlik het ons uit die bosse gespring en dan op varkwagters afgestorm, of op vroue wat met groente en goed in karretjies op pad mark toe was, maar ons het nooit rêrig iemand bygedam nie. Tom Sawyer het die varke „goudstukke” genoem en die rape „juwele”, en dan sou ons in ons grot loop grootpraat oor wat ons gedoen het en oor hoeveel mense ons vermoor en met ons teken gemerk het. Maar dit was vir my sommer 'n verspotte ou spul. Eendag het Tom 'n seun gestuur om met 'n brandende stok deur die dorp te hardloop (hy't dit 'n „slag-spreuk” genoem): dit was die teken vir die bende om bymekaar te kom. En toe vertel hy ons dat hy geheime inligting van sy spioene ontvang het, dat 'n hele klomp Spaanse handelaars en ryk Arabiere van plan was om die volgende dag in Grotlaagte te gaan uitkamp, met tweehonderd olifante en seshonderd kamele en meer as 'n duisend pakmuile, almal belaaie met diamante. Dit alles sou deur net vierhonderd soldate bewaak word. Ons moes dus gaan lê en wag en die

hele klomp vermoor in ons lokval en die goed buitmaak. Ons moes solank ons swaarde en gewere blinkvryf, het hy gesê, en sorg dat ons gereed is. Hy kon nie eers 'n raapkarretjie agternasit sonder dat al die swaarde en gewere skoongeskuur was nie—en dit terwyl die wapens net 'n klomp latte en besemstokke was waaraan jy kon skuur tot jy poegaai is sonder dat hulle 'n aksie beter was as vantevoren. Ek het nie gedink ons sou so 'n klomp Spanjaarde en Arabiere onder stof kon loop nie, maar die olifante en kamele wou ek sien. Daarom was ek die volgende dag, Saterdag, ook daar in die lokval. En toe daag daar net 'n Sondagskoolpieknik op, en dit nog die ou kleintjies boonop. Ons het die ding opgebreek en die kleingood in die kloof opgeja, maar al wat ons gekry het, was tertjies en konfyt, hoe wel Ben Rogers darem 'n lappop buitgemaak het; en Joe Harper het 'n gesangboek en 'n traktaatjie in die hande gekry. Toe't die onderwyser daarop afgekom en ons moes alles net so los en laat spaander. Van diamante het ek niks gesien nie en ek het dit vir Tom Sawyer gesê ook. Hy't volgehou dat daar vragte van die goed was, én Arabiere en olifante en dinge. En hoekom kon ons dit miskien nie sien nie? wou ek weet. Toe antwoord hy dat as ek nie so onnosel was nie en as ek 'n boek met die naam van *Don Quixote* gelees het, dan sou ek al die dinge geweet het sonder om nog te vra. Dit word alles deur towery gedoen. Daar was honderde soldate, het hy bly sê, en olifante en skatte ensovoorts, maar ons het vyande gehad (hy't hulle „townaars” genoem) wat alles in 'n Sondagskoolpieknik verander het net uit skone dwarsheid. Toe sê ek: „Goed, maar dan moet ons daardie spul townaars loop bydam.” Maar al wat Tom Sawyer daarop te antwoord gehad het, was dat ek 'n stommerik was.

„Kyk,” het hy verduidelik, „'n townenaar kan 'n hele spul geeste oproep en hulle sal jou opfoeter nog voor jy knipmes kan sê. Hulle is so hoog soos borne en so groot soos kerke.”

„Nou hoekom kry ons nie 'n paar geeste aan óns kant nie?” vra ek. „Dan kan hulle ons mos help om die ander klomp op te dons.” „Waar gaan jy hulle miskien kry?”

„Ek weet nie. Waar kry hulle die goed?”

„Dis maklik: hulle vryf 'n ou bliklamp of 'n ysterring en dan kom die gecste aangestroom, met donder en weerlig, en rook wat krul, en hulle doen net wat daar vir hulle gesê word. Hulle sal daar niks van dink om 'n wagtoring met fondamente en al uit te pluk en 'n Sondagskoolsuperintendent oor die kop te slaan daarmee nie—of enige ander mens, kom nie op aan nie.”

„En wie maak dat hulle so te kere gaan?”

„Enigiemand wat die lamp of die ring vrywe. Hulle behoort aan die man wat die vrywery doen en hulle moet alles doen wat hy sê. As hy hulle beveel om 'n paleis te bou wat veertig myl lank is, alles van diamante, en volgestop met kougom of enigiets anders, en om 'n keiser se dogter uit China te loop haal sodat hy met haar kan trou, dan moet hulle. En hulle moet dit doen voor sonop die volgende more. En nog meer: hulle moet sorg dat daardie paleis oor die land rondgalop net waarheen hy wil hê. Verstaan jy?”

„Hm,” sê ek. „Ek dink hulle’s ’n spul gekke dat hulle nie die paleis vir hulleself hou in plaas van so rondgeorder te word nie. En buiten- dien: as ék een van hulle is, sou ek ’n man Jerigo toe stuur voor ek al my werk los net omdat hy aan ’n simpel ou bliklamp gevrywe het.” „Jy kan darem snert praat, Huck Finn. Jy *moet* mos kom as hy vryf, of jy nou wil of nie.”

„As ek so lank soos ’n boom en so groot soos ’n kerk is ? Orraait dan, ek *sal* kom—maar ek wed jou ek sal daardie vent die hoogste boom in die land laat uitklim!”

„Vervlaks, dit help ook nie om met jóú te praat nie, Huck Finn. Lyk my jy weet so waar niks. Pampoenkop!”

Twee, drie dae lank het ek oor die saak gedink en toe besluit dat ek sou kyk of daar enige waarheid in die gedoente steek. Ek het ’n ou bliklamp en ’n ysterring gesoek, met die goed bos toe gegaan, en daar gevryf en gevryf tot ek soos ’n perd gesweet het. My plan was om ’n paleis in die hande te kry en die ding dan te verkoop. Maar aikóna: daar was g’n teken van ’n gees nie. Toe’t ek besluit dat die hele storie maar net weer een van Tom Sawyer se leuens was. Hý glo miskien aan Arabiere en olifante, het ek gedink, maar met my was dit ’n ander storie. Die hele ding het vir my ake veel na Sondagskool gelyk.

SECTION 4

Well, three or four months run along, and it was well into the winter, now. I had been to school most all the time, and could spell, and read, and write just a little^{e1}, and could say the multiplication table up to six times seven is thirty-five, and I don't reckon I could ever get any further than that if I was to live forever. I don't take no stock in mathematics, anyway.

At first I hated the school, but by-and-by I got so I could stand it. Whenever I got uncommon tired I played hookey, and the hiding I got next day done me good and cheered me up. So the longer I went to school the easier it got to be. I was getting sort of used to the widow's ways, too, and they warn't so raspy on me. Living in a house, and sleeping in a bed, pulled on me pretty tight, mostly, but before the cold weather I used to slide out and sleep in the woods, sometimes, and so that was a rest to me. I liked the old ways best, but I was getting so I liked the new ones, too, a little bit. The widow said I was coming along slow but sure, and doing very satisfactory. She said she warn't ashamed of me.

One morning I happened to turn over the salt-cellar at breakfast. I reached for some of it as quick as I could, to throw over my left shoulder and keep off the bad luck, but Miss Watson was in ahead of me, and crossed me off. She says, "Take your hands away, Huckleberry—what a mess you are always making." The widow put in a good word for me, but that warn't going to keep off the bad luck, I knowed that well

enough. I started out, after breakfast, feeling worried and shaky, and wondering where it was going to fall on me, and what it was going to be. There is ways to keep off some kinds of bad luck, but this wasn't one of them kind; so I never tried to do anything, but just poked along low-spirited and on the watch-out.

I went down the front garden and clumb over the stile, where you go through the high board fence. There was an inch of new snow on the ground, and I seen somebody's tracks. They had come up from the quarry and stood around the stile a while, and then went on around the garden fence. It was funny they hadn't come in, after standing around so. I couldn't make it out. It was very curious, somehow. I was going to follow around, but I stooped down to look at the tracks first. I didn't notice anything at first, but next I did. There was a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil^{e2}.

I was up in a second and shinning down the hill. I looked over my shoulder every now and then, but I didn't see nobody. I was at Judge Thatcher's as quick as I could get there. He said:

"Why, my boy, you are all out of breath. Did you come for your interest?"

"No sir," I says; "is there some for me?"

"Oh, yes, a half-yearly is in, last night. Over a hundred and fifty dollars. Quite a fortune for you. You better let me invest it along with your six thousand, because if you take it you'll spend it."

"No sir," I says, "I don't want to spend it. I don't want it

at all—nor the six thousand, nuther. I want you to take it; I want to give it to you—the six thousand and all.”

He looked surprised. He couldn't seem to make it out. He says:

“Why, what can you mean, my boy?”

I says, “Don't you ask me no questions about it, please. You'll take it—won't you?”

He says:

“Well I'm puzzled. Is something the matter?”

“Please take it,” says I, “and don't ask me nothing—then I won't have to tell no lies.”

He studied a while, and then he says:

“Oho-o. I think I see. You want to *sell* all your property to me—not give it. That's the correct idea.”

Then he wrote something on a paper and read it over, and says:

“There—you see it says ‘for a consideration.’ That means I have bought it of you and paid you for it. Here's a dollar for you. Now, you sign it.”

So I signed it, and left.

Miss Watson's nigger, Jim, had a hair-ball as big as your fist, which had been took out of the fourth stomach of an [ox](#)^{e3}, and he used to do magic with it. He said there was a spirit inside of it, and it knowed

everything. So I went to him that night and told him pap was here again, for I found his tracks in the snow. What I wanted to know, was, what he was going to do, and was he going to stay? Jim got out his hair-ball, and said something over it, and then he held it up and dropped it on the floor. It fell pretty solid, and only rolled about an inch. Jim tried it again, and then another time, and it acted just the same. Jim got down on his knees and put his ear against it and listened. But it warn't no use; he said it wouldn't talk. He said sometimes it wouldn't talk without money. I told him I had an old slick counterfeit quarter that warn't no good because the brass showed through the silver a little, and it wouldn't pass nohow, even if the brass didn't show, because it was so slick it felt greasy, and so that would tell on it everytime. (I reckoned I wouldn't say nothing about the dollar I got from the judge.) I said it was pretty bad money, but maybe the hair-ball would take it, because maybe it wouldn't know the difference. Jim smelt it, and bit it, and rubbed it, and said he would manage so the hair-ball would think it was good. He said he would split open a raw Irish potato and stick the quarter in between and keep it there all night, and next morning you couldn't see no brass, and it wouldn't feel greasy no more, and so anybody in town would take it in a minute, let alone a hair-ball. Well, I knowed a potato would do that, before, but I had forgot it.

Jim put the quarter under the hair-ball and got down and listened again. This time he said the hair-ball was all right. He said it would tell my whole fortune if I wanted it to. I says, go on. So the hair-ball talked to Jim, and Jim told it to me. He says:

“Yo’ ole father doan’ know, yit, what he’s a-gwyne to do. Sometimes he spec he’ll go ’way, en den agin he spec he’ll stay. De bes’ way is to res’ easy en let de ole man take his own way. Dey’s two angels hoverin’ roun’ ’bout him. One uv ’em is white en shiny, en ’tother one is black. De white one gits him to go right, a little while, den de black one sail in en bust it all up. A body can’t tell, yit, which one gwyne to fetch him at de las’. But you is all right. You gwyne to have considerable trouble in yo’ life, en considable joy. Sometimes you gwyne to git hurt, en sometimes you gwyne to git sick; but every time you’s gwyne to git well agin. Dey’s two gals flyin’ ’bout you in yo’ life. One uv ’em’s light en ’tother one is dark. One is rich en ’tother is po’. You’s gwyne to marry de po’ one fust en de rich one by-en-by. You wants to keep ’way fum de water as much as you kin, en don’t run no resk, ’kase it’s down in de bills^{e4} dat you’s gwyne to git hung.”

When I lit my candle and went up to my room that night, there set pap, his own self!

Chapter 4

Drie of vier maande het so verbygegaan en teen dié tyd was dit al goed winter. Ek was amper heeltyd in die skool en het geleer spel, en lees, en ’n klein bietjie skrywe, en ek kon die tafels opsê tot by ses-maal-sewe-is-vyf-en-dertig, en ek glo nie ek sou ooit veel méér in my kop kon kry nie, seifs al sou ek vir altyd en altyd bly lewe. Ek voel buitendien nie danig oor matesis nie.

Aan die begin het ek skool gehaat, maar so mettertyd het ek darem geleer om dit te verdra. Elke slag as ek té moeg begin raak het, het ek gaan stokkiesdraai; en die pak slae wat ek dan die volgende dag gekry het, het my goed gedoen en my ’n bietjie opgebeur. Hoe langer ek skoolgegaan het, hoe makliker het dit dus geword. Daarby het ek begin gewoond raak aan die weduwee se manier van doen, en hulle het nie meer so baie met my gelol nie. Dié wonery in ’n huis en die slapery in ’n bed het my natuurlik nog altyd laat

noustrop trek, maar voor die winterweer begin het, het ek partykeer nog saans uitgeglim en in die bosse gaan slaap, en so't ek 'n bietjie rus gekry. Ek het nog steeds my ou soort lewe verkies, maar so stadigaan het ek nogal van die nuwe ook begin hou—so 'n bietjie, in elk geval. Die weduwee het gesê ek vorder stadig maar seker en sy was nie meer skaam vir my nie.

Een oggend het ek per ongeluk die soutpotjie aan die ontbyttafel laat omval. Dadelik het ek daarna gegryp om dit oor my linker- skouer te gooi om ongeluk weg te hou, maar juffrou Watson het my voorgespring en die potjie weggegryp.

„Wat weg jou hande, Huckleberry!” het sy gesê. „Jy maak ook altyd 'n gemors!”

Die weduwee het 'n bietjie voorspraak vir my gedoen, maar ek het alte goed geweet dat dit nie die onheil van my sou afkeer nie. Bekom- merd en effens bewurig het ek ná ontbyt uitgestap en gewonder waar dit my sou oorval en wat dit sou wees. Mens kan iets doen om sekere soorte onheil weg te hou, maar dié was nie een van hierdie soorte nie. Daarom het ek maar liever niks gedoen nie en net neerslagtig en op my hoede bly aanslenter.

Ek het deur die voortuin geloop en met die trapeleertjie oor die hoë houtheining geklim. Daar was so 'n duimpie vars sneeu op die grond en ek het iemand se spore gewaar: hulle't daar van die klipgat se kant af gekom, 'n ruk lank hier om die leertjie bly dreutel en toe by die heining verbygestryk. Snaaks dat hulle nie ingekom het nadat hulle so lank daar rondgetrap het nie. Ek kon daar g'n kop of stert van uitmaak nie. Ek moes hulle volg en uitvind wat aangaan; maar eers het ek gebuk om die spore van nader te beskou. In die linkerkantste hak was daar 'n kruisteken met groot spykers, om die duiwel weg te hou.

Soos jy sê mes was ek daar op en toe nael ek teen die skuinste af. Elke kort-kort het ek oor my skouer teruggeloer, maar ek het nie- mand gewaar nie. So vinnig as wat my bene my kon dra, is ek na reg- ter Thatcher se huis toe.

„En toe, boet?” vra hy. „Jy's dan skoon uitasem. Het jy jou rente kom haal?”

„Nee, meneer,” sê ek. „Is daar iets vir my?”

„0 ja, ses maande s'n. Net gisteraand gekom. Meer as 'n honderd- en vyftig dollar. Vir jý is dit 'n hele fortuin. Jy meet maar liever dat ek dit saam met jou sesduisend vir jou belê, want as ek dit vir jou gee, dan spandeer jy dit alles.”

„Nee, meneer,” antwoord ek. „Ek wil nie die geld uitgee nie. Ek wil dit glád nie hê nie—en die sesduisend ook nie. Ek wil hê meneer moet dit vat. Ek gee dit vir meneer, die sesduisend, de lot.”

Hy lyk uit die veld geslaan en kan nie uitmaak wat aangaan nie. „Wat bedoel jy dan tog, boet?” vra hy.

„Moet my asseblief nie daaroor uitvra nie,” hou ek vol. „Meneer sal dit mos tog neem, nie waar nie?”

„Kyk, dít slaan my dronk,” antwoord hy. „Wat makeer?”

„Neem dit asseblief,” sê ek, „en moenie uitvra nie, want dan sal ek net moet leuens vertel.”

’n Rukkie staan hy en hinkel. Dan sê hy: „Ohoo, nou verstaan ek. Jy wil al jou besittings aan my *verkoop*—nie weggee nie? Dit klink beter.” Toe skryf hy iets op ’n stuk papier en lees dit ’n slag deur, en sê: „Dê. Kyk, daar staan: *Vir ’n bewese diens*. Dit beteken dat ek dit van jou gekoop en jou daarvoor betaal het. Hier’s vir jou ’n dollar. Teken nou die papier.”

Ek het my naam geteken en gemaak dat ek wegkom.

Juffrou Watson se negerbediende, Jim, het ’n bol hare so groot soos ’n vuur gehad wat hy uit ’n os se vierde maag gekry het en waar- mee hy kon toor. Hy’t geweet te vertel dat daar ’n gees binne-in is en dat dié ding alles onder die son geweet het. Dié nag het ek dus na hom toe gegaan en hom vertel dat Pa weer daar in die buurt rond was, want ek het sy voetspore in die sneeu gewaar. Jim het sy bol hare uit- gehaal, ’n paar woorde daaroor gemompel, dit toe opgelig en op die vloer laat val. Dit het met ’n taamlieke soliede slag te lande gekom en skaars ’n duim ver gerol. Jim het weer probeer, en weer, maar dit was elke slag dieselfde storie. Toe gaan kniel hy daarby en druk sy oor teen die ding en luister.

Verniet. Die ding wou nie praat nie. Partykeer, so’t hy my vertel, wou die bal net nie sonder geld praat nie. Ek het hom toe gesê van die verslete ou nagmaakte kwartjie wat ek gehad het. Die ding was niks werd nie, want die koper het al hier en daar deur die silwer geslaan; en seifs al hét die koper nie gewys nie, dan sou dit nog waardeloos gewees het, want dit was so geslyt en het glibberig gevoel—dit sou mens elke slag laat lont ruik. (Ek het besluit om maar stil te bly oor die dollar wat ek van die regter gekry het.) Dit was maar vrot geld, het ek hom gesê, maar dalk sou die haarbal dit vat—want hoe sou dit nou die verskil agterkom? Jim het daaraan geruik, gebyt, gevrywe, en toe aangekondig dat hy dit só sou bewerk dat die haarbal sou dink dis regte geld. Hy sou ’n spleet in ’n rou aartappel sny, die kwartjie dan daarin steek en dit die nag so laat bly; die volgende more sou mens g’n koper meer kon sien nie, die glibberigheid sou weg wees, en enig-

iemand in die dorp sou dit neem—wat nog te sê van ’n bol hare. Nou ja ek het self ook geweet dat ’n aartappel só sou maak; ek het net daarvan vergeet.

Eindelik het Jim toe die kwartjie onder die bol hare ingeskuif, daarby gekniel en weer geluister. Dié slag was die bal doodreg, het hy gesê. Die ding sou my hele fortuin vir my vertel as ek dit wou hoor. Nou goed, sê ek, maak dan so. En toe begin die haarbal met Jim praat, en Jim tolk vir my:

„Jou oukêrel weet noggie wat hy ga’ doen nie,” sê hy. „Hy dink nou hy gaat weggaan; dán dink hy weer hy gaat bly. Dis beste om maar net te wag lat die ouman sy maaïnd opmaak. Daar’s twee ingeltjies wat ál om hom rondvlie. Die enetjie is wit en blinkerig, die anner enetjie is swart. Die wittetjie lat hom so ’n rukkie goed doen, dan kom dons die swartetjie hom weer op. Dis nog te vroe-vroe om nou te seg watter enetjie hom op die ou end gaan kry. Maar dis orraait vir jóú. Daar wag hope moeilikheit op jou in die lewe, en hope goed

ok. Pertykeers gaat jy seerkry, anner kere gaat jy siek wóre, maar elke slag gaat jy weer gesond wore. Daar's twee meisiekenner- tjies wat al om jou rondvlie in die lewe. Die een is 'n ligtekop, die anner een donker. Die een is ryk, die anner een is arm. Eers gaat jy met die arm ene trou, maar lateraan met die ryke. Jy moet opletloop dat jy wegbly van die water af en nie in die moeilikgeit beland nie, want dit staat hie' geskrywe lat jy nog eendag opgehang gaan wore."

Die aand het ek my kers aangesteek en opgegaan na my kamer toe. En toe ek daar kom, toe sit Pa my daar en inwag, die einste hý.

SECTION 5

I had shut the door to. Then I turned around, and there he was. I used to be scared of him all the time, he tanned me so much. I reckoned I was scared now, too; but in a minute I see I was mistaken. That is, after the first jolt, as you may say, when my breath sort of hitched—he being so unexpected; but right away after, I see I warn't scared of him worth bothering about.

He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl—a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes—just rags, that was all. He had one ankle resting on 'tother knee; the boot on that foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through, and he worked them now and then. His hat was laying on the floor; an old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid.

I stood a-looking at him; he set there a-looking at me, with his chair tilted back a little¹⁸. I set the candle down. I noticed the window was up; so he had clumb in by the shed. He kept a-looking me all over. By-and-by he says:

“Starchy clothes—very. You think you're a good deal

of a big-bug, *don't* you?"

"Maybe I am, maybe I ain't," I says.

"Don't you give me none o' your lip," says he. "You've put on considerable many frills since I been away. I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you. You're educated, too, they say; can read and write. You think you're better'n your father^{e1}, now, don't you, because he can't? I'll take it out of you. Who told you you might meddle with such hifalut'n foolishness, hey?—who told you you could?"

"The widow. She told me."

"The widow, hey?—and who told the widow she could put in her shovel about a thing that ain't none of her business?"

"Nobody never told her."

"Well, I'll learn her how to meddle. And looky here—you drop that school, you hear? I'll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be better'n what *he* is. You lemme catch you fooling around that school again, you hear? Your mother couldn't read^{e2}, and she couldn't write, nuther, before she died. None of the family couldn't, before *they* died. *I* can't; and here you're a-swelling yourself up like this. I ain't the man to stand it—you hear? Say—lemme hear you read."

I took up a book and begun something about General Washington^{e3} and the wars. When I'd read about a half a minute, he fetched the book a whack with his hand and knocked it across the house. He says:

"It's so. You can do it. I had my doubts when you told me. Now looky here; you stop that putting on frills. I won't have it. I'll lay for you, my smarty; and if I catch you about that school I'll tan you good. First you know you'll get religion, too. I never see such a son."

He took up a little blue and yaller picture of some cows and a boy, and says:

"What's this?"

"It's something they give me for learning my lessons good."

He tore it up, and says—

"I'll give you something better—I'll give you a cowhide."

He set there a-mumbling and a-growling a minute, and then he says—

"*Ain't* you a sweet-scented dandy, though? A bed; and bedclothes; and a look'n-glass; and a piece of carpet on the floor—and your own father got to sleep with the hogs in the tanyard. I never see such a son. I bet I'll take some o' these frills out o' you before I'm done with you. Why there ain't no end to your airs—they say you're rich. Hey?—how's that?"

"They lie—that's how."

"Looky here—mind how you talk to me; I'm a-standing about all I can stand, now—so don't gimme no sass. I've been in town two days, and I hain't heard nothing but about you bein' rich. I heard about it away down the river, too. That's why I come. You git me that money^{e4} to-morrow—I want it."

"I hain't got no money."

"It's a lie. Judge Thatcher's got it. You git it. I want it."

"I hain't got no money, I tell you. You ask Judge Thatcher; he'll tell you the same."

"All right. I'll ask him; and I'll make him pungle^{e5}, too, or I'll know the reason why. Say—how much you got in your pocket? I want it."

"I hain't got only a dollar, and I want that to——"

"It don't make no difference what you want it for—you just shell it out."

He took it and bit it to see if it was good, and then he said he was going down town to get some whisky; said he hadn't had a drink all day. When he had got out on the shed, he put his head in again, and cussed me for putting on frills and trying to be better than him; and when I reckoned he was gone, he come back and put his head in again, and told me to mind about that school, because he was going to lay for me and lick me if I didn't drop that.

Next day he was drunk, and he went to Judge Thatcher's and bullyragged him and tried to make him give up the money, but he couldn't, and then he swore he'd make the law force him.

The judge and the widow went to law to get the court to take me away from him and let one of them be my guardian; but it was a new judge that had just come, and he didn't know the old man; so he said courts mustn't interfere and separate families if they could

help it; said he'd druther not take a child away from its father. So Judge Thatcher and the widow had to quit on the business.

That pleased the old man till he couldn't rest. He said he'd cowhide me till I was black and blue if I didn't raise some money for him. I borrowed three dollars from Judge Thatcher, and pap took it and got drunk and went a-blowing around and cussing and whooping and carrying on; and he kept it up all over town, with a tin pan, till most midnight; then they jailed him, and next day they had him before court, and jailed him again for a week. But he said *he* was satisfied; said he was boss of his son, and he'd make it warm for *him*.

When he got out the new judge said he was agoing to make a man of him. So he took him to his own house, and dressed him up clean and nice, and had him to breakfast and dinner and supper with the family, and was just old pie to him, so to speak. And after supper he talked to him about temperance and such things till the old man cried, and said he'd been a fool, and fooled away his life; but now he was agoing to turn over a new leaf and be a man nobody wouldn't be ashamed of, and he hoped the judge would help him and not look down on him. The judge said he could hug him for them words; so *he* cried, and his wife she cried again; pap said he'd been a man that had always been misunderstood before, and the judge said he believed it. The old man said that what a man wanted that was down, was sympathy; and the judge said it was so; so they cried again. And when it was bedtime, the old man rose up and held out his hand, and says:

"Look at it gentlemen, and ladies all; take ahold of it;

shake it. There's a hand that was the hand of a hog; but it ain't so no more; it's the hand of a man that's started in on a new life, and 'll die before he'll go back. You mark them words—don't forget I said them. It's a clean hand now; shake it—don't be afeard."

So they shook it, one after the other, all around, and cried. The judge's wife she kissed it. Then the old man he signed a pledge—made his mark. The judge said it was the holiest time on record, or something like that. Then they tucked the old man into a beautiful room, which was the spare room, and in the night sometime he got powerful thirsty and clumb out onto the porch-roof and slid down a stanchion and traded his new coat for a jug of forty-rod^{e6}, and clumb back again and had a good old time; and towards daylight he crawled out again, drunk as a fiddler, and rolled off the porch and broke his left arm in two places and was most froze to death when somebody found him after sun-up. And when they come to look at that spare room, they had to take soundings before they could navigate it.

The judge he felt kind of sore^{e7}. He said he reckoned a body could reform the ole man with a shot-gun, maybe, but he didn't know no other way.

Chapter 5

Ek het die deur toegemaak. En toe ek omdraai, sit hy daar. Ek was gewoonlik morsdoodbang vir hom omdat hy my so gelooi het; op daardie oomblik het ek ook weer gedink ek is bang. Maar byna dadelik het ek besef dat dit onnodig was. Dit wil sê: net ná die eerste skrik toe my asem as 't ware skoon weggeslaan het oor hy so skielik opgedaag het; maar net daarna het ek gesien dis nie die moeite werd om vir bom bang te wees nie.

Hy was so 'n jaar of vyftig, en hy't dit gelyk ook. Sy hare was lank en deurmekaar en vuil, en dit het laag afgehang sodat mens net sy oë daardeur kon sienblink asof hy tussen 'n klomp struikgewas deur- loer. Dit was

pikswart, g'n beduidenis van grys nie; en sy deurmekaar bakkebaard ook. Daar was g'n kleur in sy gesig nie—dit wil sê die paar plekkies waar sy gesig uitgesteek het: dit was wit. Nie 'n gewone mens se wit nie, maar 'n wit wat jou laat mislik voel het, 'n wit wat jou bloed laat koud word het, die soort wit van 'n boompadda of 'n vispens. En sy klere: vodde, dis al. Een enkel het op die ander been se knie gelê; die skoen aan dié voet was flenters en twee van sy tone het daar uitgesteek en af en toe gekriewel. Sy hoed het eenkant op die vloer gelê, 'n ou swart affêre met 'n vervalle bol, soos 'n deksel.

Ek staan hom toe só en kyk; en hy sit daar effens agteroor op sy stoel en kyk vir *my*. Ek sit die kers neer. Die venster is oopgeskuif, gewaar ek; hy't dus teen die skuur opgeklim. Hy bly maar so sit en beskou my van kop tot toon.

„Gestyfde klere de lot,” sê hy na 'n rukkie. „Jy dink nou seker jy's die koning se kat se kleintjie, nê?”

„Miskien is ek, miskien nie,” antwoord ek.

„Moenie jou astrantheid hier kom uithaal nie,” sê hy. „Jy't 'n derduiwelse spul fiemies opgetel solank ek weg is. Ek sal jou weer 'n slag op jou plek sit, kort voor lank. Ek hoor jy's nou geleerd ook. Kan lees en skrywe. Nou dink jy jy's beter as jou pa omdat hy nie kan nie, hê? Ek sal dit gou uit jou uitboender. Wie't vir jou gesê jy kan jou met sulke aansitterige gemors kom ophou, hê? Wie't jou die reg gegee?”

„Die weduwee. Sy't my die reg gegee.”

„Die weduwee, nê? En wie't vir die weduwee die reg gegee om haar lang neus in ander mense se sake te kom steek?”

„Niemand.”

„Ek sal haar leer neus insteek! En hoor hier: jy los daardie skool- ganery nou uit, gehoor? Watse gefoeter is dit om 'n seun te leer dink hy's beter as sy pa? Watse uitgeëry is dit dié vir iets beters as wat jy is? Laat ek jou wêér 'n slag daar by die skool langs vang, gehoor? Jou ma kon g'n lees of skryf voor sy dood is nie. Niemand in my familie kon voor hulle dood is nie. *Ek* kan nie. En hier's jy besig om jou haantjie te hou soos op wie weet watter mishoop! Jy moenie dink ek sluk maar sulke dinge nie, gehoor? Nou toe: laat ek hoor hoe jy lees.”

Ek tel 'n boek op en begin iets voorlees oor generaal Washington en die oorloë. Ná so 'n halfminuut pluk hy die boek uit my hande uit en smyt dit dat dit dáár oor die vloer trek.

„Goed,” sê hy. „Ek sien nou jy kan. Ek het eers gedink jy trek my been. Nou luister: nou hou jy op met dié fiemiesgoed. Ek gaan dit nie duld nie. Ek sal jou dophou, mannetjie. En as ek jou weer daar by die skool vang, dan dons ek jou op. Voor 'n mens weet waar jy is, tel jy godsdiens ook op. Sowat van 'n seun het ek sowaar nog nooit gesien nie.” Toe tel hy 'n blou en geel prentjie van 'n paar koeie en 'n seun op, en hy vra: „Wat's dit nou weer?”

„Dis wat ek kry omdat ek my lesse goed geleer het.”

Hy skeur dit flenters. „Ek sal jou iets bcters gee,” dreig hy. „'n

Afgedankste pak slae!” ’n Ruk lank bly hy brom-brom daar sit en mompel. Dan sê hy weer: „Jy's darem omtrent ’n laventelmannetjie! ’n Bed, en lakens en komberse, en ’n spieël, en ’n stuk tapyt hier op die vloer—en dan moet jou eie pa saam met die varke op die leer- looier se werf slaap. Wat se soort seun is dít vir jou ? Ek sweer ek gaan nog ’n hele paar van dié nukkies uit jou nitfoeter voor ek met jou klaar is. Genugtig, daar's g'n end aan jou fieterjassies nie. Hulle sê jy's ryk ook. Hê? Hoe't dít gebeur?”

„Hulle lieg. Dis hoë dit gebeur het.”

„Kyk hier, jy moet oppas hoe jy met my praat. Ek het nou net mooi genoeg van jou nonsies gehad. Moenie skoor *soek* nie. Ek is nou twee dae lank hier in die dorp en al wat ek hoor, is hoe ryk jy is. Ek het dit al daar onder teen die rivier ook gehoor. Dis hoekom ek hier is. Jy sorg dat ek daardie geld móre kry. Ek wil dit hê.”

„Ek het g'n geld nie.”

„Jy lieg. Regter Thatcher het dit. Loop haal dit by hom. Ek wil dit hê.”

„Ek sê jou ek hét g'n geld nie. Gaan vra vir regter Thatcher, hy sal jou dieselfde ding vertel.”

„Nou goed, ek sal hom gaan vra. Ek sal hom laat opdok ook, dit belowe ek jou. Hoeveel geld het jy daar by jou? Ek wil dit hê.”

„Net een dollar, maar ek wil dit hê vir ..”

„Dit traak my nie waarvoor jy dit wil hê nie. Uit daarmee.”

Hy vat dit en byt ’n slag daaraan om dit te toets. Toe besluit hy om eers dorp toe te gaan en ’n dop whisky te gaan soek, want heeldag het hy glo g'n druppel oor sy lippe gehad nie. Net toe hy buite op die skuur geklouter het, steek hy weer sy kop deur die venster en begin opnuut op my skel oor my „fieterjassies” en my astrantheid wat my laat dink dat ek beter as hy is; en toe ek nou eindelik dink hy's vort, duik hy weer ’n slag op, steek sy kop deur die venster en waarsku my om lig te loop vir die skool; want hy gaan my nou doplê en as ek nie in my spoor trap nie, gaan hy my basvelle aftrek.

Die volgende dag was hy smoordronk en hy gaan toe na regter Thatcher toe en begin op hom skel en probeer die geld uit hom kry, maar verniet. Nou sou hy die regter voor die hof daag, het hy gedreig.

Die regter en die weduwee is hof toe om my onder sy sorg uit te probeer kry en een van hulle as my voog aangestel te kry; maar daar was ’n nuwe regter op die bank, wat nog vreemd in die buurt was en dus nie die oukêrel geken het nie. Daarom het hy aangevoer dat die hof nie moet inmeng en gesinne opbreek as hulle dit kan verhelp nie; by wou liewer nie ’n kind van sy pa wegneem nie. Regter Thatcher en die weduwee moes dus maar die saak laat vaar.

Nou was die oubaas so in sy noppies dat hy nie rus vir sy siel kon kry nie. Hy't gedreig dat hy my pimpel en pers sou slaan as ek nie vir hom geld in die hande kry nie. By regter Thatcher het ek drie dollar gaan leen. Die het Pa gevat en hom dronk gedrink en swetsend en lawaaierend deur die strate te kere gegaan; tot amper middemag het hy met ’n ou blikpan deur die dorp geloop en

raas. Toe't hulle hom ge- vang en in die tronk gesmyt. Die volgende more het hy voorgekom en 'n week tronkstraf gekry. Maar hy was dood in sy skik, want hy was mos sy seun se baas en hy sou sorg dat hy die wêreld vir hom goed warm maak.

Toe hy daar uitkom, het die nuwe regter gesê hy sou 'n man van die oukêrel maak. Hy't hom na sy eie huis toe geneem, hom mooi skoon laat aantrek, hom drie maal op 'n dag saam met die gesin laat eet en hom soos 'n koning behandel. Ná aandete het hy met hom gepraat oor matigheid en sulke dinge, en toe begin die oubaas grens. Hy was sy lewe lank nog 'n gek, sê hy, maar nou gaan hy 'n nuwe blaadjie omslaan en iemand word waarvoor g'n mens hom hoef te skaam nie. Hy hoop die regter sal hom bystaan en nie op hom neersien nie. Die regter is daaroor só aangedaan dat hy amper die oubaas omhels, en hy begin ook huil; en sy vrou ook. Niemand het hom nog ooit reg verstaan nie, sê Pa, en die regter glo elke woord wat hy sê. 'n Arme gevalle mens het medelye nodig, gaan Pa voort. En die regter beaam dit, en toe grens hulle weer 'n slag.

Teen slapenstyd staan die oubaas op, steek sy hand uit en sê: „Dames en here, julle almal: kyk hier. Vat so, druk my hand. Hierdie hand was 'n vark s'n, maar nou behoort hy aan 'n man wat 'n nuwe lewe begin het; en hy sal liewer doodgaan as om na sy ou paaie terug te keer. Luister na my woorde. Moenie vergeet nie. Dis vandag 'n skoon hand dié. Vat hom. Moenie bang wees nie.”

Een na die ander kry sy hand beet en raak aan die huil. Die regter se vrou soen dit seifs. Eindelik sweer die oubaas 'n plegtige eed en maak sy merk daarby. Dis die heiligste dag in die geskiedenis, sê die regter—of so iets. Toe neem hulle die oubaas na 'n pragtige kamer, die vrykamer. In die nag word hy dors, klim uit op die stoep se dak, gly teen 'n paal af ondertoe en loop verkwansel sy nuwe baadjie vir 'n groot kan wyn. Met dié en al klouter hy terug en geniet hom gate uit. Teen dagbreek struikel hy weer buitentoe, so dronk soos 'n lord, rol bo van die stoep af, breek sy linkerarm op twee plekke en raak so hittete doodgevries voor iemand hom ná sonop daar kry. Toe hulle daarna na die vrykamer gaan kyk, moes hulle eers 'n skietlood uit- gooi voor hulle daar kon invaar, so diep van die gemors was dit.

Die regter het 'n bietjie seergemaak gevoel. Die oubaas kon dalk nog met 'n haelgeweer reggemaak word, het hy daarná gesê, maar gewis op g'n ander manier nie.

SECTION 6

Well, pretty soon the old man was up and around again, and then he went for Judge Thatcher in the courts to make him give up that money, and he went for me, too, for not stopping school. He caughted me a couple of times and thrashed me, but I went to school just the same, and dodged him or out-run him most of the time. I didn't want to go to school much, before, but I reckoned I'd go now to spite pap. That law trial was a slow business; appeared like they warn't ever going to get started on it; so every now and then I'd borrow two or three dollars off of the judge for him, to keep from getting a cowhiding. Every time he got money he got drunk; and every time he got drunk he raised Cain around town; and every time he raised Cain he got jailed. He was just suited—this kind of thing was right in his line.

He got to hanging around the widow's too much, and so she told him at last, that if he didn't quit using around there she would make trouble for him. Well, *wasn't* he mad? He said he would show who was Huck Finn's boss. So he watched out for me one day in the spring, and caughted me, and took me up the river about three mile, in a skiff, and crossed over to the Illinois shore where it was woody and there warn't no houses but an old log hut in a place where the timber was so thick you couldn't find it if you didn't know where it was.

He kept me with him all the time, and I never got a chance to run off. We lived in that old cabin, and he

always locked the door and put the key under his head, nights. He had a gun which he had stole, I reckon, and we fished and hunted, and that was what we lived on. Every little while he locked me in and went down to the store, three miles, to the ferry, and traded fish and game for whisky and fetched it home and got drunk and had a good time, and licked me. The widow she found out where I was, by-and-by, and she sent a man over to try to get hold of me, but pap drove him off with the gun, and it warn't long after that till I was used to being where I was, and liked it, all but the cowhide part.

It was kind of lazy and jolly, laying off comfortable all day, smoking and fishing, and no books nor study. Two months or more run along, and my clothes got to be all rags and dirt, and I didn't see how I'd ever got to like it so well at the widow's, where you had to wash, and eat on a plate, and comb up, and go to bed and get up regular, and be forever bothering over a book and have old Miss Watson pecking at you all the time. I didn't want to go back no more. I had stopped cussing, because the widow didn't like it; but now I took to it again because pap hadn't no objections. It was pretty good times up in the woods there, take it all around.

But by-and-by pap got too handy with his hick'ry, and I couldn't stand it. I was all over welts. He got to going away so much, too, and locking me in. Once he locked me in and was gone three days. It was dreadful lonesome. I judged he had got drowned and I wasn't ever going to get out any more. I was scared. I made up my mind I would fix up some way to leave there. I had tried to get out of that cabin many a time, but I

couldn't find no way. There warn't a window to it big enough for a dog to get through. I couldn't get up the chimbley, it was too narrow. The door was thick solid oak slabs. Pap was pretty careful not to leave a knife or anything in the cabin when he was away; I reckon I had hunted the place over as much as a hundred times; well, I was 'most all the time at it, because it was about the only way to put in the time. But this time I found something at last; I found an old rusty wood-saw without any handle; it was laid in between a rafter and the clapboards of the roof. I greased it up and went to work. There was an old horse-blanket nailed against the logs at the far end of the cabin behind the table, to keep the wind from blowing through the chinks and putting the candle out. I got under the table and raised the blanket and went to work to saw a section of the big bottom log out, big enough to let me through. Well, it was a good long job, but I was getting towards the end of it when I heard pap's gun in the woods. I got rid of the signs of my work, and dropped the blanket and hid my saw, and pretty soon pap come in.

Pap warn't in a good humor—so he was his natural self. He said he was down to town, and everything was going wrong. His lawyer said he reckoned he would win his lawsuit and get the money, if they ever got started on the trial; but then there was ways to put it off a long time, and Judge Thatcher knowed how to do it. And he said people allowed there'd be another trial to get me away from him and give me to the widow for my guardian, and they guessed it would win, this time. This shook me up considerable, because I didn't want to go back to the widow's any more and be so

cramped up and sivilized, as they called it. Then the old man got to cussing, and cussed everything and everybody he could think of, and then cussed them all over again to make sure he hadn't skipped any, and after that he polished off with a kind of a general cuss all round, including a considerable parcel of people which he didn't know the names of, and so called them what's-his-name, when he got to them, and went right along with his cussing.

He said he would like to see the widow get me. He said he would watch out, and if they tried to come any such game on him he knowed of a place six or seven mile off, to stow me in, where they might hunt till they dropped and they couldn't find me. That made me pretty uneasy again, but only for a minute; I reckoned I wouldn't stay on hand till he got that chance.

The old man made me go to the skiff and fetch the things he had got. There was a fifty-pound sack of corn meal, and a side of bacon, ammunition, and a four-gallon jug of whisky, and an old book and two newspapers for wadding, besides some tow. I toted up a load, and went back and set down on the bow of the skiff to rest. I thought it all over, and I reckoned I would walk off with the gun and some lines, and take to the woods when I run away. I guessed I wouldn't stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and so get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn't ever find me any more. I judged I would saw out and leave that night if pap got drunk enough, and I reckoned he would. I got so full of it I didn't notice how long I was staying, till the old man hollered and asked me whether I was asleep or drownded.

I got the things all up to the cabin, and then it was about dark. While I was cooking supper the old man took a swig or two and got sort of warmed up, and went to ripping again. He had been drunk over in town, and laid in the gutter all night, and he was a sight to look at. A body would a thought he was Adam, he was just all mud.^{e1} Whenever his liquor begun to work, he most always went for the govment. This time he says:

“Call this a govment! why, just look at it and see what it’s like. Here’s the law a-standing ready to take a man’s son away from him—a man’s own son, which he has had all the trouble and all the anxiety and all the expense of raising. Yes, just as that man has got that son raised at last, and ready to go to work and begin to do suthin’ for *him* and give him a rest, the law up and goes for him. And they call *that* govment! That ain’t all, nuther. The law backs that old Judge Thatcher up and helps him to keep me out o’ my property. Here’s what the law does. The law takes a man worth six thousand dollars and upards, and jams him into an old trap of a cabin like this, and lets him go round in clothes that ain’t fitten for a hog. They call that govment! A man can’t get his rights in a govment like this. Sometimes I’ve a mighty notion to just leave the country for good and all. Yes, and I *told* ’em so; I told old Thatcher so to his face. Lots of ’em heard me, and can tell what I said. Says I, for two cents I’d leave the blamed country and never come anear it agin. Them’s the very words. I says, look at my hat—if you call it a hat—but the lid raises up and the rest of it goes down till it’s below my chin, and then it ain’t rightly a hat at all, but more like my head was shoved up through a jint o’ stove-pipe. Look at it, says I—such a hat for me to wear—one of

the wealthiest men in this town, if I could git my rights.

“Oh, yes, this is a wonderful govment, wonderful. Why, looky here. There was a free nigger⁷ there, from Ohio; a mulatter, most as white as a white man. He had the whitest shirt on you ever see, too, and the shiniest hat; and there ain’t a man in that town that’s got as fine clothes as what he had; and he had a gold watch and chain, and a silver-headed cane—the awfulest old gray-headed nabob in the State. And what do you think? they said he was a p’fessor in a college, and could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed everything. And that ain’t the wust. They said he could *vote*^{e2}, when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? It was ’lection day, and I was just about to go and vote, myself, if I warn’t too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this country where they’d let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I’ll never vote agin. Them’s the very words I said; they all heard me; and the country may rot for all me—I’ll never vote agin as long as I live. And to see the cool way of that nigger—why, he wouldn’t a give me the road if I hadn’t shoved him out o’ the way. I says to the people, why ain’t this nigger put up at auction and sold?—that’s what I want to know. And what do you reckon they said? Why, they said he couldn’t be sold till he’d been in the State six months^{e3}, and he hadn’t been there that long yet. There, now—that’s a specimen. They call that a govment that can’t sell a free nigger till he’s been in the State six months. Here’s a govment that calls itself a govment, and lets on to be a govment, and thinks it is a govment, and yet’s got to set stock-still for six whole months before it can take ahold of a

prowling, thieving, infernal, white-shirted free nigger, and——”

Pap was agoing on so, he never noticed where his old limber legs was taking him to, so he went head over heels over the tub of salt pork, and barked both shins, and the rest of his speech was all the hottest kind of language—mostly hove at the nigger and the govment, though he give the tub some, too, all along, here and there. He hopped around the cabin considerable, first on one leg and then on the other, holding first one shin and then the other one, and at last he let out with his left foot all of a sudden and fetched the tub a rattling kick. But it warn't good judgment, because that was the boot that had a couple of his toes leaking out of the front end of it; so now he raised a howl that fairly made a body's hair raise, and down he went in the dirt, and rolled there, and held his toes; and the cussing he done then laid over anything he had ever done previous. He said so his own self, afterwards. He had heard old Sowberry Hagan in his best days, and he said it laid over him, too; but I reckon that was sort of piling it on, maybe.

After supper pap took the jug, and said he had enough whisky there for two drunks and one delirium tremens. That was always his word. I judged he would be blind drunk in about an hour, and then I would steal the key, or saw myself out, one or 'tother. He drank, and drank, and tumbled down on his blankets, by-and-by; but luck didn't run my way. He didn't go sound asleep, but was uneasy. He groaned, and moaned, and thrashed around this way and that, for a long time. At last I got so sleepy I couldn't keep my eyes open, all I could do, and so before I knowed what I was about I was sound

asleep, and the candle burning.

I don't know how long I was asleep, but all of a sudden there was an awful scream and I was up. There was pap, looking wild and skipping around every which way and yelling about snakes^{e4}. He said they was crawling up his legs; and then he would give a jump and scream, and say one had bit him on the cheek—but I couldn't see no snakes. He started and run round and round the cabin, hollering "take him off! take him off! he's biting me on the neck!" I never see a man look so wild in the eyes. Pretty soon he was all fagged out, and fell down panting; then he rolled over and over, wonderful fast, kicking things every which way, and striking and grabbing at the air with his hands, and screaming, and saying there was devils ahold of him. He wore out, by-and-by, and laid still a while, moaning. Then he laid stiller, and didn't make a sound. I could hear the owls and the wolves, away off in the woods, and it seemed terrible still. He was laying over by the corner. By-and-by he raised up, part way, and listened, with his head to one side. He says very low:

"Tramp—tramp—tramp; that's the dead; tramp—tramp—tramp; they're coming after me; but I won't go—Oh, they're here! don't touch me—don't! hands off—they're cold; let go—Oh, let a poor devil alone!"

Then he went down on all fours and crawled off begging them to let him alone, and he rolled himself up in his blanket and wallowed in under the old pine table, still a-begging; and then he went to crying. I could hear him through the blanket.

By-and-by he rolled out and jumped up on his feet

looking wild, and he see me and went for me. He chased me round and round the place, with a clasp-knife, calling me the Angel of Death⁸ and saying he would kill me and then I couldn't come for him no more. I begged, and told him I was only Huck⁹, but he laughed *such* a screechy laugh, and roared and cussed, and kept on chasing me up. Once when I turned short and dodged under his arm he made a grab and got me by the jacket between my shoulders, and I thought I was gone; but I slid out of the jacket quick as lightning, and saved myself. Pretty soon he was all tired out, and dropped down with his back against the door, and said he would rest a minute and then kill me. He put his knife under him, and said he would sleep and get strong, and then he would see who was who.

So he dozed off, pretty soon. By-and-by I got the old split-bottom chair and clumb up, as easy as I could, not to make any noise, and got down the gun. I slipped the ramrod down it to make sure it was loaded, and then I laid it across the turnip barrel, pointing towards pap, and set down behind it to wait for him to stir. And how slow and still the time did drag along.

Chapter 6

Kort Daarna was die oukêrel weer op die been en toe's hy dadelik hof toe om die geld uit regter Thatcher te kry. Hy't my ook begin bydam omdat ek nie wou ophou skoolgaan nie. 'n Paar keer het hy my in die hande gekry en afgeransel, maar ek het een stryk deur bly skoolgaan, en net uit sy pad uit gebly of vir hom weggehol. Vroeër het ek nie veel sin gehad vir skoolgaan nie, maar net om Pa te tart het ek besluit om nou deur te druk.

Die hofsaak was maar 'n stadige affêre en dit het gelyk of hulle nie van plan was om ooit daarmee te begin nie. Daarom het ek maar steeds elke kort-

kort by regter Thatcher 'n dollar of twee, drie gaan leen net om 'n loesing vry te spring. Elke liewe slag as Pa geld in die hande gekry het, het hy dronk geword; en elke slag as hy dronk geword het, het hy 'n kabaal in die dorp opgeskop; en elke slag as hy 'n kabaal opgeskop het, is hy in die tronk gesmyt. Hy was in sy element —dié soort lewe het eksieperfeksie by hom gepas.

Hy't begin om glad te gereeld om die weduwee se huis te drentel en oplaas het sy hom gewaarsku dat as hy nie ophou met sy leeglêery daarlangs nie, sy hom in die moeilikheid sou laat beland. Goeiste, was hy die joos in! Hý sou haar wys wie's Huck Finn se baas, het hy uitgevaar. En toe, eendag in die lente, lê hy my voor, en vang my, en neem my drie myl ver rivier-op in 'n skuit, en roei daar oor na die Illinois-kant. Die oewer dáár was die ene bosse, en van huise was daar g'n teken nie: net een ou houthut op 'n plek waar die bome so dig op mekaar gegroei het dat jy dit nooit sou gekry het tensy jy geweet het waar om te soek nie.

Die hele tyd het hy my by hom gehou, sodat ek nie die minste kansie gekry het om weg te hoi nie. Ons het daar in die ou hut gaan woon en snags het hy die deur gesluit en die sleutel onder sy kop- kussing gehou. Hy had 'n geweer wat hy iewers moes vasgelê het, en ons moes maar sien kom klaar met die wild wat ons kon skiet en die vis wat ons kon vang. Elke kort-kort het hy my opgesluit en drie myl ver stroom-af gegaan na die winkel by die pont. Daar't hy vis en wild geruil vir whisky, dit huis toe gebring, dronk geword, jolig rond- baljaar en my afgeransel.

Ná 'n ruk het die weduwee uitgevind waar ek is en 'n man gestuur om my in die hande te probeer kry, maar Pa het hom met die geweer weggeja. En kort daarna het ek ook begin gewoond raak aan die nuwe lewe en seifs daarvan begin hou—behalwe die loesing-gedeelte.

Alles was so half luiërig en vrolik. Daglank kon mens rondluië, rook, vísvang. En van boeke of 'n leerdery was daar g'n sprake nie. Twee maande of meer het verbygegaan en naderhand was my klere die ene toiings en vuil, en ek kon glad nie meer verstaan hoe ek ooit die lewe daar by die weduwee geniet het nie. Dink net: daar moes mens was, uit 'n bord eet, jou hare kam, stip op tyd gaan slaap en op- staan, aanhoudend sukkel met 'n boek—en dit terwyl juffrou Watson die hele tyd pik-pik na jou kant toe. Ek het opgehou met vloek omdat die weduwee nie daarvan gehou het nie; maar nou't ek weer van voor af begin, want Pa het nie omgee nie. Alles in ag geneem, kon dit vervlaks lekker wees, daar in die bos.

Maar mettertyd het Pa darem glad te konfyt begin raak met sy strop en ek kon dit nie meer uithou nie. My hele lyf was vol hale. Boonop het hy al meer en meer op sy eentjie begin rondloop en dan moes ek opgesluit word. Een keer het hy die deur gesluit en drie dae weggebly. Ek het verskriklik allenig begin voel. Dit het publiek gelyk asof hy verdrink het en ek nooit weer daar sou uitkom nie. Ek het begin bang word en besluit om 'n plan te prakseer om daar weg te kom. Tevore het ek al talle kere probeer om uit die hut te ontsnap,

maar verniet. Daar was nie 'n enkele venstertjie waar selfs 'n hond sou kon deurkruip nie. By die skoorsteen kon ek nie op nie, want dit was te nou. Die deur was gemaak van dik eikehoutbalke. Pa was goed in sy pasoppens om nooit 'n mes of 'n ding in die hut te laat bly terwyl hy vort was nie; seker 'n honderd keer het ek die plek al van bo tot onder deurgesnuffel. Om die waarheid te sê, ek was byna al die tyd daarmee besig, want dit was al manier om die tyd om te kry. Maar dié slag het ek uiteindelik tóg iets raakgeloop: 'n ou verroeste hout- saag sonder handvatsel wat bo tussen 'n balk en die dak se dekplanke gelê het. Ek het dit geolie en aan die werk gespring. Aan die agterkant van die hut, agter die tafel, was daar 'n ou perdekombers teen die stompe vassgespyker om te keer dat die wind deur die skrewe die kers doodwaai. Ek het dus onder die tafel ingekruip, die kombers opgelig en begin om 'n stuk van die breë stomp heel onder uit te saag — 'n groot genoeg gat om deur te kruip. Dit was vervlaks harde werk, maar die einde was net mooi in sig toe ek Pa se geweer in die bosse hoor. Dadelik het ek alle tekens van my gewerskaf uit die weg geruim, die kombers laat terugsak en die saag weggesteek; en kort daarna het Pa binnegekom.

Hy was glad nie in 'n goeie bui nie, dit wil sê hy was sy gewone self. Hy't vertel dat hy in die dorp was en dat alles aan die skeefloop was. Sy prokureur het gereken hy sou sy saak wen en die geld kry—as die verhoor ooit sou begin. Maar daar was maniere om die saak baie lank te vertraag en regter Thatcher het goed geweet hóé. Boonop was daar sprake van 'n tweede hofsak om my onder sy sorg uit te kry en die weduwee my voog te maak, en dié keer sou die ding waarskynlik deurgaen. Dit was vir my 'n groot skok, want ek wou nie teruggaan na die weduwee en daar so ingehok lewe soos tevore nie. Beskaafd, noem hulle dit. Toe begin die oubaas vloek, en hy vloek alles en almal aan wie hy kon dink; en daarna vloek hy hulle weer 'n slag van voor af uit, net om seker te maak dat hy niemand vergeet het nie; en dié sluit hy af met 'n soort algemene vloek teen 'n ieder en 'n elk, seifs 'n hele klomp wie se name hy nie eers geken het nie (hulle het hy sommer „dinges” genoem toe hulle aan die beurt kom); en hy hou maar aan.

Hy wou nog die weduwee sien wat my sou kom afneem! Ohoo nee, hy sou fyn doplê en as hulle met enige slimstreke begin, sou hy my 'n ses, sewe myl verder wegneem na 'n plek wat hy goed geken het. Daar kon hulle maar soek tot hulle neerslaan, my sou hulle nie kry nie. Dit het my weer taamlik onrustig laat voel, maar nie vir lank nie, want ek was nie van plan om daar te bly tot hy tot dié stap oorgaan nie.

Daamá stuur die oubaas my toe skuit toe om die goed te loop haal wat hy saamgebring het. Daar was 'n vyftigpond-sak meliemeel, 'n stuk varkspek, ammunisie, 'n viergelling-kan whisky, 'n ou boek en twee koerante om lekplekke mee toe te stop, en 'n klomp uitgepluisde tou. Ek het een vraag aangedra en toe teruggekom en op die skuit se voorstewe gaan sit en rus. Daar't ek alles goed sit en uitdink en besluit dat ek die geweer en 'n paar lyne sou neem en dan met die bosse langs wegvlug. Ek was nie van plan om net op

éen plek te bly nie, maar ek sou die hele land deurtrek, veral snags, en dan maar lewe van wat ek jag of vang. So sou ek voortgaan tot ek só ver is dat die oubaas of die weduwee my g'neen ooit weer in die hande sou kry nie. As Pa daardie nag weer dronk genoeg word—soos ek gemeen het hy sou—dan sou ek sommer dié kans gebruik om my pad oop te saag. Die ding het my so gepak dat ek nooit besef het hoe lank ek daar bly nie; tot Pa skielik op my geskree het om te vra of ek aan die slaap was of versuip het.

Ek het toe maar die laaste klomp goed aangedra hut toe. Dit het net mooi begin donker word. Terwyl ek besig was met kosmaak, het die oubaas 'n dop of twee gesluk, stadigaan opgewarm geraak en begin weglê. Hy was in die dorp al dronk en het heelnag op straat gelê, sodat hy maar sleg gelyk het. Mens kon hom vir Adam aansien, want hy was die ene modder.

Nou, slag op slag as die vog begin trek, het hy teen die regering begin uitpak. Dié aand trek hy toe los met: „Noem julle dit 'n regering? Kyk net 'n slag daarna. Hier staan die wet op sy agterpote, reg om 'n man se seun van hom af te neem—sy bloedeie seun wat hy met soveel gesukkel en kommer en onkoste grootgemaak het! En nes dié man nou eindelijk sy seun na sy hand geleer het sodat hy aan die werk kan spring en sy pa 'n bietjie blaaskans kan gee, dan takel die wet hom. Dit noem hulle 'n regering! Dis ook nog nie al nie. Die wet staan agter daardie ou regter Thatcher en help hom om my eiendom van my weg te hou. Sien? Dis wat die wet doen. Hy vat 'n man wat sesduisend dollar en méér besit, en druk hom hier in 'n ou hool van 'n krotjie in, soos dié, en laat hom maar rondloop in klere wat g'n vark sal dra nie. Dit noem hulle 'n regering? Waar's mens se regte met 'n regering soos dié? Partykeer is ek sowaar lus en trap vir goed uit die land uit. En ek het so vir hulle *gesê* ook: ek het dit vir ou regter Thatcher in sy gesig gesê. Daar's baie wat dit gehoor het en dit kan bewys. Dit kos niks, sê ek, dit kos niks of ek skoert hier uit die blienken land uit en *bly* uit hom uit. Dis wat ek gesê het. Kyk na my hoed, sê ek vir hom—as jy dit 'n hoed kan noem—want die bol slaat op en die rand slaat af tot dit hier onder my ken hang. Is dit miskien 'n hoed? Dit lyk of die ding deur 'n stuk stoofpyp getrek is. Kyk hier, sê ek vir hom, dis die hoed wat ek moet dra, en ek is een van die ryk- ste mense hier in die dorp as julle my net my regte wil gun!

„O ja-nee, dis 'n wonderlike regering. Wonderlik. Hoor hier : daar was 'n vry neger in die dorp, glo uit Ohio, 'n Baster, amper so wit soos 'n witmens. Hy't die witste hemp aangehad wat jy in jou dag des lewens nog gesien het, en die blinkste hoed, en ek wil nog die man sien wat mooier klere dra as hý; en hy't 'n goue oorlosie aan 'n ketting gehad, en 'n kiere met 'n silwerknop—die grootste ou grys- kop-kapitalis in die hele provinsie. En wee-jy wat? Hulle weet te vertel hy's perfesser in 'n kollege en hy kan 'n hele spul tale praat en hy weet alles. Dis nog nie die ergste nie. Hulle sê hy kan *stem*, daar in sy kontrei. Nou kyk, dis my oor. Wat word van die land, sou ek graag wil weet? Dit was eleksiedag en ek was op pad om self te loop stem—net jammer ek was toe te dronk om by die bus uit te kom. Maar toe ek hoor daar's 'n

provinsie in dié land waar 'n neger stem- reg het, toe sit ek my voet neer. Nooit stem ék weer níé, sê ek vir hulle. Dis wat ek gesê het, ja, en hulle't my almal gehoor. Die land kan nou maar na sy peetje loop vir al wat ék omgee. Stem, stem ek nie weer in my lewensdag nie. En jy moes gesien het hoe koeltjies daardie neger hom gedra. Hy sou sowaar nie padgegee het vir my as ek hom nie weggestamp het nie. Vir wat vat julle nie die neger ven- dusie toe en verkoop hom nie? vra ek. Dis wat ek wil weet. En wee- jy wat sê hulle vir my? Hulle sê vir my hy kannie as slaaf verkoop word voor hy ses maande in die provinsie was nie, en hy was nog nie so lank hier nie. Daar's nou vir jou 'n voorbeeld. En dan praat hulle van 'n regering, as jy nie 'n vry neger kan verkoop voor hy ses maande in die provinsie is nie! Dis nou 'n regering wat homself 'n regering noem, en wat voorgee dat hy 'n regering is, en wat dink dat hy 'n regering is—en hy sit ses maande lank morsdoodstil voordat hulle 'n vinger lê op 'n vervloekste vry neger met 'n wit hemp wat rondloop en steel en ...”

Pa was so boos aan die redeneer dat hy nooit opgelet het waar sy wankelrige bene hom heendra nie en toe hy hom kom kry, tuimel hy halsoorkop bo-oor die vaatjie gesoute varkveis en kap altwee sy maermerries teen die rand. Die res van sy toespraak slaan daar vuur en swawel uit sy woorde uit, hoofsaaklik teen die regering en die neger, met tussenin so 'n paar venvysings na die vaatjie. Intussen galop hy taamlik wild deur die hut, eers op die een been en toe weer op die ander, terwyl hy sy twee maermerries om die beurt teen hom vasdruk; en uiteindelik haak hy skielik met sy linkervoet af en gee die vaatjie 'n gruwelike skop. Maar dit was nie 'n baie wyse besluit nie, want dit was die skoen waar die paar tone aan die voorkant so half oor die rand gelek het. Toe gee hy vir jou 'n skreeu wat mens se hare orent laat staan, en hy slaat net daar in die vuilis neer en rol heen en weer en hou sy tone vas. En die vloeke wat daar tóé uit sy mond stroom, was erger as enigiets wat ek ooit tevore van hom gehoor het. Hy't dit self ook daamá erken. Op sy dag het hy Sowberry Hagan hoor vloek, toe dié op sy fleur was, en Pa't gemeen dat hy daardie skemeraand seifs vir Sowberry uitgestof het; maar dalk oordryf dit die saak darem effens.

Ná aandete tel pa sy kan op en sê dat hy daar genoeg whisky het om twee mense dronk te maak en nog een die horries te gee. Só het hy aljimmers gesê. Oor sowat 'n uur, het ek gereken, sou hy smoor- dronk wees en dan kon ek of die sleutel vaslê óf vir my 'n pad oop- saag buitentoe, nes ek wil. Hy't gedrink en gedrink en na 'n rukkíe op sy komberse omgerol, maar die geluk was nie aan my kant nie. Hy wou net nie vas aan die slaap raak nie; heelyd was hy rusteloos. 'n Lang ruk het hy gelê en kreun en steun en heen en weer rol. Nader- hand was ek so vaak dat ek my oë nie meer kon oophou nie; en voor ek mooi geweet het waar ek was, was ek vas aan die slaap, met die kers nog altyd aan die brand.

Hoe lank ek geslaap het, weet ek nie. Maar skielik was daar 'n ontsettende skreeu. Ek het opgespring. Met wilde oë was Pa besig om heen en weer te

hardloop terwyl hy aanhou skree oor slange wat teen sy bene opseil; dan spring hy skielik weer in die lug en gil, en sê dat een hom aan die wang gebyt het. Maar ék kon g'n slang sien nie. Hy't al in die rondte in die hut begin hardloop en die hele tyd geskree: „Vat hom weg! Vat hom weg! Hy byt my hier aan die nek!”

Ek het nog nooit iemand met só 'n verwilderde uitdrukking in sy oë gesien nie. Binne 'n paar minute was hy poegaai. Hygend het hy neergeval en ongelooflik vinnig om en om begin rol terwyl hy alles rondom hom links en regs wegskep, met sy hande klou en gryp in die lug, en eenstryk bly gil en skree dat 'n spul duiwels hom beet het. Stadigaan het hy uitgeput geraak. 'n Rukkie het hy stil bly lê en kerm. Toe nóg stiller, sonder enige geluid. Ver weg in die bosse kon ek die uile hoor, en die wolwe, en alles was vreeslik stil. Hy't daar eenkant in die hoek gelê. Na 'n tydjie het hy halfpad orent gekom en sy kop skuins gehou om te blister.

„Doef-doen-doen,” sê hy baie saggies. „Dis die dooies. Doef-doen- doef, hulle kom my haal. Maar ek wil nie gaan nie . . . O, hulle's koud! Los . . . ! Laat 'n arme ou derduivel tog met rus!”

Toe gaan hy handeervoet staan en begin wegkruip, smekend dat hulle hom met rus moet laat, en hy rol hom in sy ou kombers toe en gaan onder die ou dennehouttafel opkrul, nog steeds smekend. En toe begin hy huil. Ek kon hom deur die kombers hoor.

'n Rukkie later rol hy weer daar uit en spring verwilderd orent. En toe hy my gewaar, storm hy op my af. Met 'n knipmes ja hy my oral in die hut rond, want hy't gedink ek is die Doodsengel en hy wou my vermoor sodat ek hom nie kon kom haal nie. Ek het gesoebat en hom verseker dat ek maar net Huck was, maar hy't 'n aaklige skreelag gegee, en gebrul, en al op my hakke gebly.

Een keer het ek kortom gespring en onder sy arm deur gekoes, maar hy't my baadjie tussen die skouerblaaië beetgekry en ek het 'n oomblik gedog dis nou klaar met kees; maar toe wikkell ek my soos blits uit die baadjie uit en maak dat ek wegkom. Na 'n ruk was hy moeg. Toe gaan val-sit hy met sy rug teen die deur en sê hy gaan net 'n oomblikkie rus voor hy my kom doodmaak. Die mes skuif hy onder hom in. Nou gaan hy eers slaap, sê hy, sodat hy sy kragte kan herwin. Dan sal ons sien wie's wie.

Spoeedig is hy vas aan die slaap. Toe sleep ek die ou stoel met die stukkende boom nader en klim suutjies-suutjies daarop, doodbang dat ek dalk 'n geluid sal maak, en haal die geweer van die muur af. Ek pluk die loop ondertoe om seker te maak dat dit gelaai is, toe lê ek dit dwars oor die vaattjie vol rape neer en neem daar agter stelling in, wagtend dat hy moet roer. En hoe traag en suutjies sleep die tyd nie toe verby nie!

SECTION 7

“Git up! what you ’bout!”

I opened my eyes and looked around, trying to make out where I was. It was after sun-up, and I had been sound asleep. Pap was standing over me, looking sour—and sick, too. He says—

“What you doin’ with this gun?”

I judged he didn’t know nothing about what he had been doing, so I says:

“Somebody tried to get in, so I was laying for him.”

“Why didn’t you roust me out?”

“Well I tried to, but I couldn’t; I couldn’t budge you.”

“Well, all right. Don’t stand there palavering all day, but out with you and see if there’s a fish on the lines for breakfast. I’ll be along in a minute.”

He unlocked the door and I cleared out, up the river bank. I noticed some pieces of limbs and such things floating down, and a sprinkling of bark; so I knowed the river had begun to rise. I reckoned I would have great times, now, if I was over at the town. The June rise^{e1} used to be always luck for me; because as soon as that rise begins, here comes cord-wood floating down, and pieces of log rafts—sometimes a dozen logs together; so all you have to do is to catch them and sell them to the wood yards and the sawmill.

I went along up the bank with one eye out for pap and 'tother one out for what the rise might fetch along. Well, all at once, here comes a canoe; just a beauty, too, about thirteen or fourteen foot long, riding high like a duck. I shot head first off of the bank, like a frog, clothes and all on, and struck out for the canoe. I just expected there'd be somebody laying down in it, because people often done that to fool folks, and when a chap had pulled a skiff out most to it they'd raise up and laugh at him. But it warn't so this time. It was a drift-canoe, sure enough, and I clumb in and paddled her ashore. Thinks I, the old man will be glad when he sees this—she's worth ten dollars. But when I got to shore pap wasn't in sight yet, and as I was running her into a little creek like a gully, all hung over with vines and willows, I struck another idea; I judged I'd hide her good, and then, stead of taking to the woods when I run off, I'd go down the river about fifty mile and camp in one place for good, and not have such a rough time tramping on foot.

It was pretty close to the shanty, and I thought I heard the old man coming, all the time; but I got her hid; and then I out and looked around a bunch of willows, and there was the old man down the path apiece just drawing a bead on a bird with his gun. So he hadn't seen anything.

When he got along, I was hard at it taking up a "trot" line^{e2}. He abused me a little for being so slow, but I told him I fell in the river and that was what made me so long. I knowed he would see I was wet, and then he would be asking questions. We got five cat-fish off of the lines and went home.

While we laid off, after breakfast, to sleep up, both of us being about wore out, I got to thinking that if I could fix up some way to keep pap and the widow from trying to follow me, it would be a certainer thing than trusting to luck to get far enough off before they missed me; you see, all kinds of things might happen. Well, I didn't see no way for a while, but by-and-by pap raised up a minute, to drink another barrel of water, and he says:

"Another time a man comes a-prowling round here, you roust me out, you hear? That man warn't here for no good. I'd a shot him. Next time, you roust me out, you hear?"

Then he dropped down and went to sleep again—but what he had been saying give me the very idea I wanted. I says to myself, I can fix it now so nobody won't think of following me.

About twelve o'clock we turned out and went along up the bank. The river was coming up pretty fast, and lots of driftwood going by on the rise. By-and-by, along comes part of a log raft—nine logs fast together. We went out with the skiff and towed it ashore. Then we had dinner. Anybody but pap would a waited and seen the day through, so as to catch more stuff; but that warn't pap's style. Nine logs was enough for one time; he must shove right over to town and sell. So he locked me in and took the skiff and started off towing the raft about half-past three. I judged he wouldn't come back that night. I waited till I reckoned he had got a good start, then I out with my saw and went to work on that log again. Before he was 'tother side of the river I was out of the hole; him and his raft was just a speck on the water away off yonder.

I took the sack of corn meal and took it to where the canoe was hid, and shoved the vines and branches apart and put it in; then I done the same with the side of bacon; then the whisky jug; I took all the coffee and sugar there was, and all the ammunition; I took the wadding; I took the bucket and gourd, I took a dipper and a tin cup, and my old saw and two blankets, and the skillet and the coffee-pot. I took fishlines and matches^{e3} and other things—everything that was worth a cent. I cleaned out the place. I wanted an axe, but there wasn't any, only the one out at the wood pile, and I knowed why I was going to leave that. I fetched out the gun, and now I was done.

I had wore the ground a good deal, crawling out of the hole and dragging out so many things. So I fixed that as good as I could from the outside by scattering dust on the place, which covered up the smoothness and the sawdust. Then I fixed the piece of log back into its place, and put two rocks under it and one against it to hold it there,—for it was bent up at that place, and didn't quite touch ground. If you stood four or five foot away and didn't know it was sawed, you wouldn't ever notice it; and besides, this was the back of the cabin and it warn't likely anybody would go fooling around there.

It was all grass clear to the canoe; so I hadn't left a track. I followed around to see. I stood on the bank and looked out over the river. All safe. So I took the gun and went up a piece into the woods and was hunting around for some birds, when I see a wild pig; hogs soon went wild in them bottoms after they had got away from the prairie farms. I shot this fellow and took him into camp.

I took the axe and smashed in the door—I beat it and hacked it considerable, a-doing it. I fetched the pig in and took him back nearly to the table and hacked into his throat with the ax, and laid him down on the ground to bleed—I say ground, because it *was* ground—hard packed, and no boards. Well, next I took an old sack and put a lot of big rocks in it,—all I could drag—and I started it from the pig and dragged it to the door and through the woods down to the river and dumped it in, and down it sunk, out of sight. You could easy see that something had been dragged over the ground. I did wish Tom Sawyer was there^{e4}. I knowed he would take an interest in this kind of business, and throw in the fancy touches. Nobody could spread himself like Tom Sawyer in such a thing as that.

Well, last I pulled out some of my hair, and bloodied the ax good, and stuck it on the back side, and slung the ax in the corner. Then I took up the pig and held him to my breast with my jacket (so he couldn't drip) till I got a good piece below the house and then dumped him into the river. Now I thought of something else. So I went and got the bag of meal and my old saw out of the canoe and fetched them to the house. I took the bag to where it used to stand, and ripped a hole in the bottom of it with the saw, for there warn't no knives and forks on the place—pap done everything with his clasp-knife, about the cooking. Then I carried the sack about a hundred yards across the grass and through the willows east of the house, to a shallow lake that was five mile wide and full of rushes—and ducks too, you might say, in the season. There was a slough or a creek leading out of it on the other side, that went miles away, I don't know where, but it didn't go to the

river. The meal sifted out and made a little track all the way to the lake. I dropped pap's whetstone there too, so as to look like it had been done by accident. Then I tied up the rip in the meal sack with a string, so it wouldn't leak no more, and took it and my saw to the canoe again.

It was about dark, now; so I dropped the canoe down the river under some willows that hung over the bank, and waited for the moon to rise. I made fast to a willow; then I took a bite to eat, and by-and-by laid down in the canoe to smoke a pipe and lay out a plan. I says to myself, they'll follow the track of that sackful of rocks to the shore and then drag the river for me. And they'll follow that meal track to the lake and go browsing down the creek that leads out of it to find the robbers that killed me and took the things. They won't ever hunt the river for anything but my dead carcass. They'll soon get tired of that, and won't bother no more about me. All right; I can stop anywhere I want to. Jackson's Island^{e5} is good enough for me; I know that island pretty well, and nobody ever comes there. And then I can paddle over to town, nights, and slink around and pick up things I want. Jackson's Island's the place.

I was pretty tired, and the first thing I knowed, I was asleep. When I woke up I didn't know where I was, for a minute. I set up and looked around, a little scared. Then I remembered. The river looked miles and miles across. The moon was so bright I could a counted the drift logs that went a slipping along, black and still, hundred of yards out from shore. Everything was dead quiet, and it looked late, and *smelt* late. You know what I mean—I don't know the words to put it in.

I took a good gap and a stretch, and was just going to unhitch and start, when I heard a sound away over the water. I listened. Pretty soon I made it out. It was that dull kind of a regular sound that comes from oars working in rowlocks when it's a still night. I peeped out through the willow branches, and there it was—a skiff, away across the water. I couldn't tell how many was in it. It kept a-coming, and when it was abreast of me I see there warn't but one man in it. Thinks I, maybe it's pap, though I warn't expecting him. He dropped below me, with the current, and by-and-by he come a-swinging up shore in the easy water^{e6}, and he went by so close I could a reached out the gun and touched him. Well, it was pap, sure enough—and sober, too, by the way he laid to his oars.

I didn't lose no time. The next minute I was a-spinning down stream soft but quick in the shade of the bank. I made two mile and a half, and then struck out a quarter of a mile or more towards the middle of the river, because pretty soon I would be passing the ferry landing and people might see me and hail me. I got out amongst the drift-wood and then laid down in the bottom of the canoe and let her float. I laid there and had a good rest and a smoke out of my pipe, looking away into the sky, not a cloud in it. The sky looks ever so deep when you lay down on your back in the moonshine; I never knowed it before. And how far a body can hear on the water such nights! I heard people talking at the ferry landing. I heard what they said, too, every word of it. One man said it was getting towards the long days and the short nights, now. 'Tother one said *this* warn't one of the short ones, he reckoned—and then they laughed, and he said it over

again and they laughed again^{e7}; then they waked up another fellow and told him, and laughed, but he didn't laugh; he ripped out something brisk and said let him alone. The first fellow said he 'lowed to tell it to his old woman—she would think it was pretty good; but he said that warn't nothing to some things he had said in his time. I heard one man say it was nearly three o'clock, and he hoped daylight wouldn't wait more than about a week longer. After that, the talk got further and further away, and I couldn't make out the words any more, but I could hear the mumble; and now and then a laugh, too, but it seemed a long ways off.

I was away below the ferry now. I rose up and there was Jackson's Island, about two mile and a half down stream, heavy-timbered and standing up out of the middle of the river, big and dark and solid, like a steamboat without any lights. There warn't any signs of the bar at the head—it was all under water, now.

It didn't take me long to get there. I shot past the head at a ripping rate, the current was so swift, and then I got into the dead water and landed on the side towards the Illinois shore. I run the canoe into a deep dent in the bank that I knowed about; I had to part the willow branches to get in; and when I made fast nobody could a seen the canoe from the outside.

I went up and set down on a log at the head of the island and looked out on the big river and the black driftwood, and away over to the town, three mile away, where there was three or four lights twinkling. A monstrous big lumber raft was about a mile up stream, coming along down, with a lantern in the middle of it. I watched it come creeping down, and when it was most

abreast of where I stood I heard a man say, "Stern oars, there! heave her head to starboard!" I heard that just as plain as if the man was by my side.

There was a little gray in the sky, now; so I stepped into the woods and laid down for a nap before breakfast.

Chapter 7

„Opstaan ! Wat het in jóú gevaar?”

Ek maak my oë oop en kyk rond, probeer uitvind waar ek is. Die son is al uit en ek het vas geslaap. Hier skuins oor my staan Pa gebuk —nors, en siek daarby.

„Wat hê-jy met die geweer aangevang?” vra hy.

Ek besef dat hy g'n idee het van alles wat hy aangevang het nie, daarom skerm ek: „Iemand het probeer inkom, toe't ek hom sit en inwag.”

„Hoekom het jy my nie wakker gemaak nie?”

„Ek het probeer, maar ek kon nie. Ek kon Pa nie verroer nie.” „Hm. Nou goed dan. Moenie die hele dag daar staan en klets nie. Maak dat jy hier uitkom en gaan kyk of daar êrens 'n vis aan 'n lyn gebyt het sodat ons kan eet. Ek kom nou-nou.”

Hy sluit die deur oop en ek maak dat ek uitkom, na die rivierwal se kant toe. Hier en daar het takke en basstukke afdryf: die rivier het dus begin styg. As ek nou in die dorp was, het daar 'n heerlike tyd op my gewag, want Juniemaand se vloedwaters het altyd vir my geluk gebring: nes die rivier begin afkom het, was daar altyd dryfhout en stukke van houtvlotte—partykeers 'n hele twaalf stuks stompe aan mekaar vasgebind—wat ek kon voorkeer en dan aan die hout- werwe of die saagmeul kon loop verkwansel.

Ek het al teen die oewer opgestryk, met die een oog in pa se rigting en die ander op die rivier, om te sien wat daar dalk mag afdryf. Toe, skielik, kom daar 'n kano af—en 'n pragstuk daarby, seker dertien, veertien voet lank en hoog en droog «oos 'n eend. Kop eerste en kleren-al is ek daar teen die wal af en soos 'n padda die water in, reguit na die kano toe. Ek het so half en half verwag dat daar dalkies iemand in kon wees, want daar's baie mense wat so maak net om ander 'n streep te trek: nes jy dan die skuit wal toe uitgesleep het, lig die kêrel sy kop op en lag jou uit. Maar dié keer het dit nie gebeur nie. Dié kano was rêrig aan die afdryf, en ek kon daar inwip en wal toe roei. Die oubaas sal in sy skik hieroor wees, dink ek by myselfers, want die ding is seker goed tien dollar werd. Maar teen die tyd dat ek by die wal uitkom, was

daar van Pa nog g'n teken nie; en terwyl ek in 'n klein, weggesteekte inhammetjie onder digte wilgerlower en rankplante inroeï, skiet 'n ander gedagte my te binne. Hoekom kan ek die kano nie hier wegsteek nie? Dan hoef ek mos nie boslangs te hou wanneer ek wegghol nie: ek kan vyftig myl ver rivier-af dryf, daar vir goed kamp opslaan, en dit alles sonder die ellende van die hele ent te voet aan te sukkel.

Die inhammetjie lê sommer naby die hut en die hele tyd verbeel ek my dat ek die oukêrel hoor aankom. Maar ek slaag tog daarin om die skuit goed weg te steek. Daarna wip ek uit, loer om 'n paar wilgers—en daar staan Pa, 'n entjie verder in die paadjie af, besig om korrel te vat na 'n voël. Hy't dus niks gewaar nie.

Toe hy weer begin aanstap, hou ek my hard besig by een van die lyne. Hy begin sommer uit die staanspoor op my skel omdat ek so lank draai, maar ek antwoord dat ek in die rivier geval het. Ek weet mos alte goed hy sal sien dat ek nat is en begin uitvra daaroor. Saam- saam haal ons vyf platkoppe van die hoeke af en vat dan die pad terug hut toe.

Ná ontbyt gaan ons weer 'n ruk omrol om 'n uiltjie te knip want albei van ons is morsdoodmoeg. Ek bly egter wakker lê om 'n plan te prakseer om Pa en die weduwee te keer dat hulle my nie agternasit as ek wegghol nie—want dit sou veel beter wees as om te hoop dat blote geluk my sou help om ver genoeg weg te kom voordat hulle ontdek dat ek weg is. Enigiets kon immers gebeur. 'n Ruk lank kon ek net nie aan 'n uitweg dink nie. Maar toe, na 'n rukkjie, staan Pa 'n oom- blik op om weer 'n kan water te drink; en hy sê: „Volgende keer as daar weer iemand hier kom rondlê, maak jy my wakker, gehoor? Daardie man het nie om dowe neute gekom nie. Ek sou hom vrekge- skiet het. Volgende keer maak jy my wakker, verstaan?”

Toe kantel hy om en raak weer aan die slaap. Maar wat hy gesê het, het my presies die idee gegee wat ek nodig gehad het. Ek gaan die saak só prakseer dat g'n sterfling sal probeer om my agterna te sit nie.

Teen twaalfuur word ons wakker en kies die paadjie teen die oewer op. Die rivier is nou sommer vinnig aan die aanswel en hope dryfhout stroom verby. Na 'n rukkjie kom daar 'n houtvlot af—nege groot stompe wat aan mekaar vasgemaak is. Ons ry met die skuit in die stroom in en bring dit wal toe. Daarna eet ons. Enigiemand anders sou eers daar bly wag het om te sien wat die res van die dag oplewer, maar dit was nie Pa se raanier van werk nie. Nege stompe was genoeg vir één slag. Hy moet nou kwansuis eers dorp toe om die goed te gaan verkoop. Hy sluit my dus weer toe en so teen halfvier se stryk gaan hy skuit toe om die stompe weg te tou. Vannag sal hy heel nag wegbly, besluit ek; ek wag dus net tot hy goed weg is, loop haal dan weer my saag en takel die stomp. Nog voor hy die oorkant van die rivier kon bereik het, is ek daar uit. Hy en sy vlot is nog net 'n klein spikkeltjie doer in die verte.

Ek neem die sak mieliemeel en sleep dit na die plek waar ek die kano weggesteek het, stoot die rankplante en wilgertakke eenkant toe en laai die

sak in; daarna gaan haal ek die stuk varkspek, toe die kan whisky, al die koffie en suiker, die ammunisie, die geweerpluissies, die emmer en die kalbas, 'n skepkannetjie en 'n blikbeker, my ou saag en twee komberse en 'n kookpotjie en die koffiekannetjie. Ek dra vislyne aan, en vuurhoutjies en ander goed—enigiets van waarde. Ek stroop die hele hut van 'n kant af. 'n Byl wil ek graag hê, maar daar is nie een nie—behalwe die een by die houthoop, maar dié laat ek om 'n baie bepaalde rede agterbly. Oplaas gaan haal ek die geweer ook—en toe's alles klaar.

Met al my in- en uitkruipery en die uitslepery van die spul goed het ek nogal diep skuurmerke op die grond laat bly. Dié't ek so goed as wat ek kon van buite af probeer regmaak deur sand daaroor te strooi om die gladgetrapte grond en die saagsels te bedek. Daarna het ek die stomp weer mooi in die regte posisie gedruk, twee klippers daar onder ingeskuif en een teenaan om dit te stut—want die stomp was daar effens krom en het nie mooi grond geraak nie. As mens 'n vier, vyf voet daarvandaan gestaan het en jy't nie gewéét van die saagplek nie, sou jy dit nooit gewaar nie; buitendien was dit aan die hut se agterkant en dit was nie danig waarskynlik dat iemand daar- langs sou rondpeuter nie.

Daarvandaan tot by die kano was die grond die ene gras, dus het ek g'n spoor laat bly nie. Op die oewer het ek gaan staan en oor die rivier uitgestaar. Alles veilig. Toe vat ek die geweer en stap 'n slag die bosse in om te gaan voëls soek. Maar skielik kom ek op 'n wilde vark af—in dié geweste word varke maklik wild as hulle van die plase op die vlakte af wegloop. Ek het die ou toe neergetrek en terugge- sleep kamp toe.

Met die byl kap ek die deur flenters en sorg dat ek dit behoorlik opmors. Daarna bring ek die vark in, tot byna by die tafel, gee hom 'n kaphou teen die keel en laat hom daar op die grond lê en bloei. Grond, sê ek, want dit was grond: vasgestampde kleigrond sonder enige planke daaroor. Toe loop haal ek 'n ou sak en pak die ding vol klippe—soveel as wat ek maar kon wegsleep—en ek begin dit van die vark af wegsleep, by die deur uit, deur die bos, tot by die rivier. Daar stamp ek dit in die water en dit verdwyn onder die oppervlakte. Mens kon dadelik sien dat iets daar oor die grond gesleep was. Ai, hoe't ek nie gewens Tom Sawyer kon daar wees nie! Hy hou mos van sulke dinge en hy weet net hoe om die fyn dingetjies af te rond. G'n mens kan hom só in iets inlewe soos Tom Sawyer nie!

Nou ja, uiteindelik trek ek toe nog 'n klompie van my hare uit, smeer die byl goed vol bloed, plak die hare teen die rugkant vas en smyt die byl in die hoek neer. Toe tel ek die vark op, hou hom styf in my baadjie toe sodat hy nie moet bloei nie, en dra hom 'n hele ent rivier-af; daar smyt ek hom ook in die water.

'n Ander gedagte skiet my skielik te binne. Ek gaan haal weer die sak meliemeel en my ou saag uit die kano en dra dit hut toe. Ek sit die sak op sy ou staanplek neer, steek met die saag 'n gat in die onderkant (want messe en vurke was daar nie: vir die kookwerk het Pa altyd net sy knipmes gebruik), en

dra die sak so 'n honderd tree ver oor die gras en tussen die wilgers deur, tot by 'n vlak meer wat vyf myl breed was en vol biesies (en eende ook, in die seisoen). Aan die oorkant was daar 'n uitloop al in 'n bosklofie langs wat myle ver gestrek het—waarheen, weet ek nie, maar in elk geval nie rivier toe nie. Die meel het heelpad bly uitsif en 'n duidelike spoor tot by die meer gelaat. Daar't ek Pa se slypsteen ook sommer neergegooi, asof dit toevallig daar geval het. Toe bind ek die gat in die sak met tou toe sodat dit nie meer moet lek nie, en dra dit saam met my saag terug kano toe.

Teen dié tyd was dit omtrent donker. Dus het ek die kano onder 'n klomp oorhangende wilgertakke in die water laat sak en gewag dat die maan moet opkom. Ek het teen 'n wilger vasmeeer, 'n stukkie kos geëet en tee plat op my rug in die kano gaan lê en pyp rook terwyl ek my plan uitwerk. Ek reken toe sô: hulle sal die sleepsels van daardie sak vol klippe rivier toe volg en dan daar begin soek na my lyk; en hulle sal die streep meel na die meer toe volg en dan al langs die uitloop in die klofie langs gaan soek na die rowers wat my ver-moor en die goed gesteel het. In die rivier self sal hulle net my lyk soek, niks anders nie, en hulle sal gou moeg word daarvoor en nie meer lol nie. Gaaf: ek kan dus gaan vasmaak net waar ek lus kry. Jacksonseiland is nogal skaflik: ek ken die plek redelik goed en g'n mens kom ooit daar nie. Dan kan ek nog snags dorp toe roei, daar rondsleenter en die goed vaslê wat ek nodig kry. Jacksonseiland is nêr die plek.

Ek was deksels moeg en voor ek my mooi kom kry, was ek aan die slaap. Toe ek eindelijk weer wakker skrik, weet ek die eerste paar oomblikke glad nie waar ek is nie. 'n Bietjie verskrik sit ek regop en kyk rond. Toe onthou ek. Myle der myle, so lyk dit, strek die rivier in die breedte uit. Die maan skyn so helder dat ek die stompe kan tel wat swart en geluidloos honderde tree weg van die oewer af verbygedryf kom. Alles was doodstil, en dit het gelyk—en *geruik*—of dit laat moet wees. Julie weet tog wat ek bedoel, ek weet nie mooi hoe om dit te sê nie.

Ek het 'n slag lekker gegaap en my uitgerek, en ek was net van plan om die tou los te maak en weg te roei, toe ek van doer oor die water 'n geluid hoor. Dit was die dowwe, egalige soort geluid van roeispane wat op 'n stil nag in die roeimikke knars. Ek loer onder die wilgertakke uit en gewaar dit: 'n skuit, doer op die water. Ek kan nie uitmaak hoeveel mense daarin is nie, maar dit kom al nader; en toe dit reg oorkant my is, gewaar ek dat dit net een man is. Dalk is dit Pa, dink ek, al is ek hom nog nie te wagte nie. Hy kom stroomlanges onder my verbygedryf en swaai dan uit die stroom weg na die stiller kantwater. Hy kom sô naby my verby, dat ek hom met die geweer kan aanraak. En dit *is* toe Pa, einste hy—en nugter boonop! Dit kan ek aflei van die manier waarop hy met die spane werk.

Nou't ek g'n oomblik langer versuim nie. 'n Minuut ná ek hom gewaar het, dobber ek geruisloos maar vinnig al in die skaduwee van die wal langs stroom-af. Twee-en-'n-half myl vorder ek op dié manier, dan swaai ek 'n kwartmyl of meer weg van die kant af, want ek moet nou-nou by die pont

verbykom en dan kan dit net gebeur dat iemand my gewaar en my roep. Ek sukkel deur die dryfhout en gaan dan plat op die kano se boom lê: nou moet hy maar self verder drywe. Op my dooie gemak lê ek daar en rus en rook my pyp, en staar hoog in die lug in op. Daar's nie 'n wolkie te siene nie. Die lug lyk soveel dieper as anders as mens in die maanlig so op jou rug lê en opkyk. Ek het dit nog nooit tevore agtergekom nie. En hoe ver kan mens nie op sulke nagte oor die water hoor nie! Ek kon mense by die pont se aanlêplek hoor praat—elke liewe woord kon ek uitmaak. Een man het gesê die seisoen is nou aan verander: die dae word langer, die nagte krimp. Iemand anders het geantwoord dat dié nag gewis nie een van die kortes was nie—en toe lag hulle, en hy herhaal weer wat hy gesê het, en hulle lag weer. Toe maak hulle iemand anders wakker en vertel dit vir hóm ook, en lag, maar dié ou't nie saamgelag nie. Hy't net iets bitsigs gebrom en gesê hulle moet hom uitlos. Toe sê die eerste ou hy gaan dit vir sy vrou ook vertel—sy sou dit geniet; maar dit was nog niks in vergelyking met ánder grappe wat hy al op sy dag gemaak het nie. Daarná het ek een hoor sê dat dit amper drie-uur was, en hy hoop nie dit duur nog baie langer as 'n week voor dit lig word nie. Intussen het die praterij al verder en verder weggeraak en ek kon nie meer hoor wat hulle praat nie; dit was net 'n dowwe gemompel, en af en toe 'n lag, maar alles baie ver weg.

Teen dié tyd was ek al 'n hele ent onderkant die pont. Ek het opge- staan—en daar was Jacksonseiland voor my, so 'n twee-en-'n-half- myl laer af, dig begroei met bosse, en groot en donker en massief daar in die middel van die rivier, soos 'n stoomboot sonder ligte. Van die sandbank aan die voorpunt was daar g'n teken nie—alles was reeds onder water.

Dit het my nie lank geneem om daar te kom nie. Die stroom was so vinnig dat ek in 'n vaart by die eiland se bopunt verbygeskiet het; toe't ek in dooiwater beland en aan wal gestap aan die Illinois-kant. Die kano het ek in 'n diep inham teen die wal gebêre—ek het die plek van vroeër dae al geken, en dit was so dig begroeid dat ek die wilger- takke met my hande moes wegstoot om verby te kom. Nadat ek die bootjie dáár vasgemeer het, sou niemand dit meer van buite af kou sien nie.

Ek het 'n entjie oor die eiland gestap en toe op 'n stomp aan die bokant gaan sit en uitgestaar oor die groot rivier en die swart op- drifels, en doer ver na die dorp toe, drie myl hoër op, met 'n drie, vier liggies nog aan die knipper. Sowat 'n myl stroomop was daar 'n ontsettende groot houtvlot aan die nader dryf, met 'n lantern in die middel. Ek het dit heeltyd dopgehou terwyl dit al nader kruip. Amper regoor my skuilplek het ek iemand hoor sê: „Opskud met die stert- spaan daar agter! Swaai haar stuurboord toe!” Die woorde was so duidelik asof die man hier langs my staan.

Teen did tyd was daar 'n gryserigheidjie in die lug. Dus het ek die bosse ingestryk en 'n ruk gaan lê en slaap voor onthyt.

SECTION 8

The sun was up so high when I waked, that I judged it was after eight o'clock. I laid there in the grass and the cool shade, thinking about things and feeling rested and ruther comfortable and satisfied. I could see the sun out at one or two holes, but mostly it was big trees all about, and gloomy in there amongst them. There was freckled places on the ground where the light sifted down through the leaves, and the freckled places swapped about a little, showing there was a little breeze up there. A couple of squirrels set on a limb and jabbered at me very friendly.

I was powerful lazy and comfortable—didn't want to get up and cook breakfast. Well, I was dozing off again, when I thinks I hears a deep sound of "boom!" away up the river. I rouses up and rests on my elbow and listens; pretty soon I hears it again. I hopped up and went and looked out at a hole in the leaves, and I see a bunch of smoke laying on the water a long ways up—about abreast the ferry. And there was the ferry-boat full of people, floating along down. I knowed what was the matter, now. "Boom!" I see the white smoke squirt out of the ferry-boat's side. You see, they was firing cannon over the water,⁹ trying to make my carcass come to the top.

I was pretty hungry, but it warn't going to do for me to start a fire, because they might see the smoke. So I set there and watched the cannon-smoke and listened to the boom. The river was a mile wide, there, and it always looks pretty on a summer morning—so I was

having a good enough time seeing them hunt for my remainders, if I only had a bite to eat. Well, then I happened to think how they always put quicksilver in loaves¹⁰ of bread and float them off because they always go right to the drowned carcass and stop there. So says I, I'll keep a lookout, and if any of them's floating around after me, I'll give them a show. I changed to the Illinois edge of the island to see what luck I could have, and I warn't disappointed. A big double loaf come along, and I most got it, with a long stick, but my foot slipped and she floated out further. Of course I was where the current set in the closest to the shore—I knowed enough for that. But by-and-by along comes another one, and this time I won. I took out the plug and shook out the little dab of quicksilver, and set my teeth in. It was "baker's bread"—what the quality eat—none of your low-down corn-pone.

I got a good place amongst the leaves, and set there on a log, munching the bread and watching the ferry-boat, and very well satisfied. And then something struck me. I says, now I reckon the widow or the parson or somebody prayed that this bread would find me, and here it has gone and done it. So there ain't no doubt but there is something in that thing. That is, there's something in it when a body like the widow or the parson prays, but it don't work for me, and I reckon it don't work for only just the right kind.

I lit a pipe and had a good long smoke and went on watching. The ferry-boat was floating with the current, and I allowed I'd have a chance to see who was aboard when she come along, because she would come in close, where the bread did. When she'd got pretty well along down towards me, I put out my pipe

and went to where I fished out the bread, and laid down behind a log on the bank in a little open place. Where the log forked I could peep through.

By-and-by she come along, and she drifted in so close that they could a run out a plank and walked ashore. Most everybody was on the boat. Pap, and Judge Thatcher, and Bessie Thatcher,¹¹ and Jo Harper, and Tom Sawyer, and his old Aunt Polly, and Sid^{e1} and Mary, and plenty more. Everybody was talking about the murder, but the captain broke in and says:

“Look sharp, now; the current sets in the closest here, and maybe he’s washed ashore and got tangled amongst the brush at the water’s edge. I hope so, anyway.”

I didn’t hope so. They all crowded up and leaned over the rails, nearly in my face, and kept still, watching with all their might. I could see them first-rate, but they couldn’t see me. Then the captain sung out:

“Stand away!” and the cannon let off such a blast right before me that it made me deaf with the noise and pretty near blind with the smoke, and I judged I was gone. If they’d a had some bullets in, I reckon they’d a got the corpse they was after. Well, I see I warn’t hurt, thanks to goodness. The boat floated on and went out of sight around the shoulder of the island. I could hear the booming, now and then, further and further off, and by-and-by after an hour, I didn’t hear it no more. The island was three mile long. I judged they had got to the foot, and was giving it up. But they didn’t yet a while. They turned around the foot of the island and started up the channel on the Missouri side^{e2}, under steam,

and booming once in a while as they went. I crossed over to that side and watched them. When they got abreast the head of the island they quit shooting and dropped over to the Missouri shore and went home to the town.

I knowed I was all right now. Nobody else would come a-hunting after me. I got my traps out of the canoe and made me a nice camp in the thick woods. I made a kind of a tent out of my blankets to put my things under so the rain couldn't get at them. I caught a cat-fish and haggled him open with my saw, and towards sundown I started my camp fire and had supper. Then I set out a line to catch some fish for breakfast.

When it was dark I set by my camp fire smoking, and feeling pretty satisfied; but by-and-by it got sort of lonesome, and so I went and set on the bank and listened to the currents washing along, and counted the stars and drift-logs and rafts that come down, and then went to bed; there ain't no better way to put in time when you are lonesome; you can't stay so, you soon get over it.

And so for three days and nights. No difference—just the same thing. But the next day I went exploring around down through the island. I was boss of it; it all belonged to me, so to say, and I wanted to know all about it; but mainly I wanted to put in the time. I found plenty strawberries, ripe and prime; and green summer-grapes, and green razberries; and the green blackberries was just beginning to show. They would all come handy by-and-by, I judged.

Well, I went fooling along in the deep woods till I

judged I warn't far from the foot of the island. I had my gun along, but I hadn't shot nothing; it was for protection; thought I would kill some game nigh home. About this time I mighty near stepped on a good sized snake, and it went sliding off through the grass and flowers, and I after it, trying to get a shot at it. I clipped along, and all of a sudden I bounded right on to the ashes of a camp fire that was still smoking^{e3}.

My heart jumped up amongst my lungs. I never waited for to look further, but uncocked my gun and went sneaking back on my tip-toes as fast as ever I could. Every now and then I stopped a second, amongst the thick leaves, and listened; but my breath come so hard I couldn't hear nothing else. I slunk along another piece further, then listened again; and so on, and so on; if I see a stump, I took it for a man; if I trod on a stick and broke it, it made me feel like a person had cut one of my breaths in two and I only got half, and the short half, too.

When I got to camp I warn't feeling very brash, there warn't much sand in my craw; but I says, this ain't no time to be fooling around. So I got all my traps into my canoe again so as to have them out of sight, and I put out the fire and scattered the ashes around to look like an old last year's camp, and then clumb a tree.

I reckon I was up in the tree two hours; but I didn't see nothing, I didn't hear nothing—I only *thought* I heard and seen as much as a thousand things. Well, I couldn't stay up there forever; so at last I got down, but I kept in the thick woods and on the lookout all the time. All I could get to eat was berries and what was left over from breakfast.

By the time it was night I was pretty hungry. So when it was good and dark, I slid out from shore before moonrise and paddled over to the Illinois bank—about a quarter of a mile. I went out in the woods and cooked a supper, and I had about made up my mind I would stay there all night, when I hear a *plunkety-plunk, plunkety-plunk*, and says to myself, horses coming; and next I hear people's voices^{e4}. I got everything into the canoe as quick as I could, and then went creeping through the woods to see what I could find out. I hadn't got far when I hear a man say:

"We better camp here, if we can find a good place; the horses is about beat out. Let's look around."¹²

I didn't wait, but shoved out and paddled away easy. I tied up in the old place, and reckoned I would sleep in the canoe.

I didn't sleep much. I couldn't, somehow, for thinking. And every time I waked up I thought somebody had me by the neck. So the sleep didn't do me no good. By-and-by I says to myself, I can't live this way; I'm agoing to find out who it is that's here on the island with me; I'll find it out or bust^{e5}. Well, I felt better, right off.

So I took my paddle and slid out from shore just a step or two, and then let the canoe drop along down amongst the shadows. The moon was shining, and outside of the shadows it made it most as light as day. I poked along well onto an hour, everything still as rocks and sound asleep. Well by this time I was most down to the foot of the island. A little ripply, cool breeze begun to blow, and that was as good as saying

the night was about done. I give her a turn with the paddle and brung her nose to shore; then I got my gun and slipped out and into the edge of the woods. I set down there on a log and looked out through the leaves. I see the moon go off watch and the darkness begin to blanket the river. But in a little while I see a pale streak over the tree-tops, and knowed the day was coming. So I took my gun and slipped off towards where I had run across that camp fire, stopping every minute or two to listen. But I hadn't no luck, somehow; I couldn't seem to find the place. But by-and-by, sure enough, I caught a glimpse of fire, away through the trees. I went for it, cautious and slow. By-and-by I was close enough to have a look, and there laid a man on the ground. It most give me the fan-tods^{e6}. He had a blanket around his head, and his head was nearly in the fire. I set there behind a clump of bushes, in about six foot of him, and kept my eyes on him steady. It was getting gray daylight, now. Pretty soon he gapped, and stretched himself, and hove off the blanket, and it was Miss Watson's Jim! I bet I was glad to see him. I says:

"Hello, Jim!" and skipped out.

He bounced up and stared at me wild. Then he drops down on his knees, and puts his hands together and says:

"Doan' hurt me—don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I awluz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em. You go en git in de river agin, whah you b'longs, en doan' do nuffin to Ole Jim, 'at 'uz awluz yo' fren'."

Well, I warn't long making him understand I warn't dead. I was ever so glad to see Jim. I warn't lonesome,

now. I told him I warn't afraid of *him* telling the people where I was. I talked along, but he only set there and looked at me; never said nothing. Then I says:

"It's good daylight. Le's get breakfast. Make up your camp fire good."

"What's de use er makin' up de camp fire to cook strawbries en sich truck? But you got a gun, hain't you? Den we kin git sumfn better den strawbries."

"Strawberries and such truck," I says. "Is that what you live on?"

"I couldn' git nuffn else," he says.

"Why, how long you been on the island, Jim?"

"I come heah de night arter you's killed."

"What, all that time?"

"Yes-indeedy."

"And ain't you had nothing but that kind of rubbage to eat?"

"No, sah—nuffn else."

"Well, you must be most starved, ain't you?"

"I reck'n I could eat a hoss. I think I could. How long you ben on de islan'?"

"Since the night I got killed."

"No! W'y, what has you lived on? But you got a gun. Oh, yes, you got a gun. Dat's good. Now you kill sumfn

en I'll make up de fire."

So we went over to where the canoe was, and while he built a fire in a grassy open place amongst the trees, I fetched meal and bacon and coffee, and coffee-pot and frying-pan, and sugar and tin cups, and the nigger was set back considerable, because he reckoned it was all done with witchcraft. I caught a good big cat-fish, too, and Jim cleaned him with his knife, and fried him.

When breakfast was ready, we lolled on the grass and eat it smoking hot. Jim laid it in with all his might, for he was most about starved. Then when we had got pretty well stuffed, we laid off and lazied.

By-and-by Jim says:

"But looky here, Huck, who wuz it dat 'uz killed in dat shanty, ef it warn't you?"

Then I told him the whole thing, and he said it was smart. He said Tom Sawyer couldn't get up no better plan than what I had. Then I says:

"How do you come to be here, Jim, and how'd you get here?"

He looked pretty uneasy, and didn't say nothing for a minute. Then he says:

"Maybe I better not tell."

"Why, Jim?"

"Well, dey's reasons. But you wouldn' tell on me ef I 'uz to tell you, would you, Huck?"

“Blamed if I would, Jim.”

“Well, I b’lieve you, Huck. I—I *run off*.”

“Jim!”

“But mind, you said you wouldn’ tell—you know you said you wouldn’ tell, Huck.”

“Well, I did. I said I wouldn’t, and I’ll stick to it. Honest *injun*^{e7} I will. People would call me a low down Abolitionist^{e8} and despise me for keeping mum—but that don’t make no difference. I ain’t agoing to tell, and I ain’t agoing back there anyways. So now, le’s know all about it.”

“Well, you see, it ’uz dis way. Ole Missus—dat’s Miss Watson—she pecks on me all de time, en treats me pooty rough, but she awluz said she wouldn’ sell me down to Orleans. But I noticed dey wuz a nigger trader roun’ de place considable, lately, en I begin to git oneasy. Well, one night I creeps to de do’, pooty late, en de do’ warn’t quite shet, en I hear ole missus tell de widder she gwyne to sell me down to Orleans, but she didn’ want to, but she could git eight hund’d dollars for me^{e9}, en it ’uz sich a big stack o’ money she couldn’ resis’. De widder she try to git her to say she wouldn’ do it, but I never waited to hear de res’. I lit out mighty quick, I tell you.

“I tuck out en shin down de hill en ’spec to steal a skift ’long de sho’ som’ers ’bove de town, but dey wuz people astirrin’ yit, so I hid in de ole tumble-down cooper shop on de bank to wait for everybody to go ’way. Well, I wuz dah all night. Dey wuz somebody roun’ all de time. ’Long ’bout six in de mawnin’, skifts

begin to go by, en 'bout eight er nine every skift dat went 'long wuz talkin' 'bout how yo' pap come over to de town en say you's killed. Dese las' skifts wuz full o' ladies en genlmen agoin' over for to see de place. Sometimes dey'd pull up at de sho' en take a res' b'fo' dey started acrost, so by de talk I got to know all 'bout de killin'. I 'uz powerful sorry you's killed, Huck, but I ain't no mo', now.

"I laid dah under de shavins all day. I 'uz hungry, but I warn't afeared; bekase I knowed ole missus en de widder wuz goin' to start to de camp-meetn' right arter breakfas' en be gone all day, en dey knows I goes off wid de cattle 'bout daylight, so dey wouldn' 'spec to see me roun' de place, en so dey wouldn' miss me tell arter dark in de evenin'. De yuther servants wouldn' miss me, kase dey'd shin out en take holiday, soon as de ole folks 'uz out'n de way.

"Well, when it come dark I tuck out up de river road, en went 'bout two mile er more to whah dey warn't no houses. I'd made up my mine 'bout what I's agwyne to do. You see ef I kep' on tryin' to git away afoot, de dogs 'ud track me; ef I stole a skift to cross over, dey'd miss dat skift, you see, en dey'd know 'bout what I'd lan' on de yuther side en whah to pick up my track. So I says, a raff is what I's arter; it doan' *make* no track.

"I see a light a-comin' roun' de p'int, bymeby, so I wade' in en shove' a log ahead o' me, en swum^{e10} more'n half-way acrost de river, en got in 'mongst de drift-wood, en kep' my head down low, en kinder swum agin de current tell de raff come along. Den I swum to de stern uv it, en tuck aholt. It clouded up en 'uz pooty dark for a little while. So I clumb up en laid down on de

planks. De men 'uz all 'way yonder in de middle, whah de lantern wuz. De river wuz arisin' en dey wuz a good current; so I reck'n'd 'at by fo' in de mawnin' I'd be twenty-five mile down de river, en den I'd slip in, jis' b'fo' daylight, en swim asho' en take to de woods on de Illinoi side.

"But I didn' have no luck. When we 'uz mos' down to de head er de islan', a man begin to come aft wid de lantern. I see it warn't no use fer to wait, so I slid overboard, en struck out fer de islan'. Well, I had a notion I could lan' mos' anywhers, but I couldn't—bank too bluff. I 'uz mos' to de foot er de islan' b'fo' I foun' a good place. I went into de woods en judged I wouldn' fool wid raffs no mo', long as dey move de lantern roun' so. I had my pipe en a plug er dog-leg, en some matches in my cap, en dey warn't wet, so I 'uz all right."

"And so you ain't had no meat nor bread to eat all this time? Why didn't you get mud-turkles?"

"How you gwyne to git'm? You can't slip up on um en grab um; en how's a body gwyne to hit um wid a rock? How could a body do it in de night? en I warn't gwyne to show myself on de bank in de daytime."

"Well, that's so. You've had to keep in the woods all the time, of course. Did you hear 'em shooting the cannon?"

"Oh, yes. I knowed dey was arter you. I see um go by heah; watched um thoo de bushes."

Some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting. Jim said it was a sign it was going

to rain. He said it was a sign when young chickens flew that way, and so he reckoned it was the same way when young birds done it. I was going to catch some of them, but Jim wouldn't let me. He said it was death. He said his father laid mighty sick once, and some of them caught a bird, and his old granny said his father would die, and he did.

And Jim said you musn't count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck. The same if you shook the table-cloth after sundown. And he said if a man owned a bee-hive, and that man died, the bees must be told about it ^{te11} before sun-up next morning, or else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die. Jim said bees wouldn't sting idiots; but I didn't believe that, because I had tried them lots of times myself, and they wouldn't sting me.

I had heard about some of these things before, but not all of them. Jim knowed all kinds of signs. He said he knowed most everything. I said it looked to me like all the signs was about bad luck, and so I asked him if there warn't any good-luck signs. He says:

"Mighty few—an' *dey* ain' no use to a body. What you want to know when good luck's a-comin' for? want to keep it off?" And he said: "Ef you's got hairy arms en a hairy breas', it's a sign dat you's agwyne to be rich. Well, dey's some use in a sign like dat, 'kase it's so fur ahead. You see, maybe you's got to be po' a long time fust, en so you might git discourage' en kill yo'sef 'f you did n' know by de sign dat you gwyne to be rich bymeby."

"Have you got hairy arms and a hairy breast, Jim?"

"What's de use to ax dat question? don' you see I has?"

"Well, are you rich?"

"No, but I ben rich wunst, and gwyne to be rich agin. Wunst I had foteen dollars, but I tuck to specalat'n', en got busted out."

"What did you speculate in, Jim?"

"Well, fust I tackled stock."

"What kind of stock?"

"Why, live stock. Cattle, you know. I put ten dollars in a cow. But I ain' gwyne to resk no mo' money in stock. De cow up 'n' died on my han's."

"So you lost the ten dollars."

"No, I didn' lose it all. I on'y los' 'bout nine of it. I sole de hide en taller^{e12} for a dollar en ten cents."

"You had five dollars and ten cents left. Did you speculate any more?"

"Yes. You know dat one-laigged nigger dat b'longs to old Misto Bradish^{e13}? well, he sot up a bank, en say anybody dat put in a dollar would git fo' dollars mo' at de en' er de year. Well, all de niggers went in, but dey didn' have much. I wuz de on'y one dat had much. So I stuck out for mo' dan fo' dollars, en I said 'f I didn' git it I'd start a bank myself. Well o' course dat nigger want' to keep me out er de business, bekase he say dey

warn't business 'nough for two banks, so he say I could put in my five dollars en he pay me thirty-five at de en' er de year.

"So I done it. Den I reck'n'd I'd inves' de thirty-five dollars right off en keep things a-movin'. Dey wuz a nigger name' Bob, dat had ketched a wood-flat, en his marster didn' know it; en I bought it off'n him en told him to take de thirty-five dollars when de en' er de year come; but somebody stole de wood-flat dat night, en nex' day de one-laigged nigger say de bank 's busted. So dey didn' none uv us git no money."

"What did you do with the ten cents, Jim?"

"Well, I 'uz gwyne to spen' it, but I had a dream, en de dream tole me to give it to a nigger name' Balum—Balum's Ass^{e14} dey call him for short, he's one er dem chuckle-heads, you know. But he's lucky, dey say, en I see I warn't lucky. De dream say let Balum inves' de ten cents en he'd make a raise for me. Well, Balum he tuck de money, en when he wuz in church he hear de preacher say dat whoever give to de po' len' to de Lord, en boun' to git his money back a hund'd times. So Balum he tuck en give de ten cents to de po', en laid low to see what wuz gwyne to come of it."

"Well, what did come of it, Jim?"

"Nuffn' never come of it. I couldn' manage to k'leck dat money no way; en Balum he couldn'. I ain' gwyne to len' no mo' money 'dout I see de security. Boun' to git yo' money back a hund'd times, de preacher says! Ef I could git de ten *cents* back, I'd call it squah, en be glad er de chanst."

“Well, it’s all right, anyway, Jim, long as you’re going to be rich again some time or other.”

“Yes—en I’s rich now, come to look at it. I owns mysef, en I’s wuth eight hund’d dollars. I wisht I had de money, I wouldn’ want no mo’.”

Chapter 8

Die son sit al só hoog toe ek wakker skrik, dat dit al na later as agtuur gelyk het. Daar op die gras in die koel skadu- wee het ek bly lê, besig om aan dinge te dink, met ’n gevoel van rus, en heerlik gemaklik en tevrede. Deur een of twee gaatjies kon ek die son sien, maar verder was daar net die groot bome om my, met somberheid in die skaduwees tussen hulle. Op die grond waar die lig deur die blare gesif het, het die gras vol spikkels gelê; en die spikkel- righeid het effens gefladder, wat bewys het dat daar ’n luggie daarbó getrek het. Op ’n dik tak het ’n paar eekhorinkies gesit, doodvriende- lik met my aan die babbel.

Ek was so salig lui en gemaklik—het net nie lus gevoel om op te staan en te gaan ontbyt maak nie. En ek was net weer aan die weg- raak, toe ek my verbeel ek hoor ’n diep „boem”-geluid ’n ent teen die rivier op. Ek lig my op en lê op my elmboë en luister; en so ’n oom- blikkie later hoor ek dit weer. Ek wip orent en gaan loer deur ’n gat in die blare, en omtrent gelyk met die pont, doer aan die bokant van die rivier, sien ek ’n rookwolk oor die water drywe. En die pontskuit is self tjokkenblok vol mense aan die afdrywe. Toe weet ek net mooi

wat aan die gang is. „Boem!” Die wit rook peul by die boot se sykant uit. Hulle was besig om kanonskote oor die water af te skiet, sien, om my lyk te laat boontoe kom.

Ek was vervlaks honger, maar ’n vuur durf ek nie maak nie, want nou- noutjies gewaar hulle die rook. Toe bly ek maar net daar sit en kyk na die kanonrook en’ luister na die dreunskote. Die rivier is ’n myl breed daar en somermórens is dit altyd mooi—ek het dit dus geniet om te kyk hoe hulle daar rondsoek na my oorblyfsels. As ek **net** iets te ete gehad het! Net toe val dit my by dat die mense mos die gewoonte het om kwiksilwer in brode te gooi en dié te laat afdryf, omdat die brood glo reguit na die verdrinkte lyk toe drywe en daar bly staan. Nou goed, besluit ek, ek gaan my oë oophou en as daar een van dié goed na my kant toe kom, gaan ek hulle ’n ding of twee wys. Ek wikkkel oor na die Illinois-kant om te sien hoe die geluk my dáár sal behandel—en ek word ook nie teleurgestel nie. ’n Groot dubbelbrood kom aangedrywe

en so amper-amper haak ek dit met 'n lang stok nader, maar ongelukkig gly my voet en die brood dryf verby. Dit was natuurlik die plek waar die stroom die naaste aan die wal kom—en ek het dit goed genoeg geweet. Maar net so 'n rapsie later kom daar nog 'n brood verby en dié keer kry ek dit reg. Ek haal die prop uit, skud die bolletjie kwiksilwer uit, en hap. Bakkersbrood, dis wat dit was—die brood wat die hoëlui eet; glad nie die onder- dorpers se ou growwe bruinbrood nie.

Tussen die blare soek ek vir my 'n lekker plek uit, en gaan sit daar en smul aan my brood terwyl ek die pontskuit dophou, heerliksalig tevrede. Toe val iets my by. Kyk, dink ek, ek sweer die weduwee of die dominee of iemand het gebid dat dié brood by my moet uitkom, en nou hét dit. Dit lyk my dus tóg daar steek iets in die affêre. Ek bedoel nou, daar steek iets in as iemand soos die weduwee of die dominee dit bid—maar vir my werk dit nie. Ek besluit toe sô: dis 'n ding wat net vir die regte *soort* mens werk.

Toe steek ek maar my pyp op en sit lekker lank en rook terwyl ek nog een stryk deur dophou wat aangaan. Die pontboot is stroom- langes aan die afdryf en dit begin vir my lyk asof ek sal kan uitmaak wie daar in die ding sit, want hy moet mos sommer hier naby my verbykom, nes die brood. Toe hulle nou sommer hier kortby is, maak ek my pyp dood en sluip na die plek waar ek die brood uitgehaal het. Daar gaan ek op 'n klein ooptetjie agter 'n boomstomp op die oewer lê. Die stomp maak so 'n mik waar ek mooi kan deurloer.

Na 'n rukkie kom hulle verby—sô naby dat hulle maklik 'n loop- plank kon uitstoot en aan wal gestap het as hulle wou. Die hele lot was daar in die boot: Pa, en regter Thatcher, en Bessie Thatcher, en Joe Harper, en Tom Sawyer, en sy ou tant Polly, en Sid en Mary, en nog 'n hele klomp ander mense. Almal is besig om oor die moord te praat. Maar toe praat die kaptein tussenin en sê:

„Hou nou julle oë oop. Die stroom loop hier baie naby die oewer verby en dit kan wees dat hy uitgespoel het op die wal tussen die boskaas daar aan die waterkant. Ek hoop in elk geval so.”

Ek het nie-so gehoop nie. Hulle drom almal teen die relings saam en loer daaroor, ampertjies in my gesig, en hulle sê g'n woord nie en kyk net so al wat hulle kan. Ek kon hulle oop en bloot sien, maar hulle kon my nie gewaar nie.

Toe skree die kaptein: „Staan eenkant toe!” En die kanon bulder so donderend hier reg voor my dat ek skoon doof van die dreuning en blind van die rook daar lê, en ek is oortuig daarvan dat dit nou klaar met kees is. En as hulle 'n koeël of wat in die loop gehad het, sou hulle stellig die lyk gekry het waarna hulle op soek was. Vader- dank het ek toe darem niks oorgekom nie. Die boot dryf verder en verdwyn om die skouer van die eiland. Af en toe kan ek die kanon nog hoor dreun, al verder en verder, tot mens ná 'n uur niks meer kon hoor nie. Die eiland is drie myl lank, en soos dit vir my gelyk het, het hulle tot by die onderpunt gevaar en daar tou opgegooi. Maar hulle het tóg nie—dit het ek gou agtergekom: hulle het om die onderpunt geseil en toe weer

aan die Missouri-kant begin opstoom; elke kort- kort het daar weer 'n skoot gedreun. Ek het oorgedraf na dié kant toe en hulle weer dopgehou. Toe hulle oplaas weer aan die bokant van die eiland kom, hou hulle op met skiet, vaar terug na die Missourie-oewer en gaan huis toe.

Nou was ek veilig. Niemand anders sou na my kom soek nie. Ek het my goeters uit die kano gaan haal en 'n lekker kamp daar in die ruie boskasie opgeslaan. Met my komberse het ek 'n soort tent saam- geflans om die reent van my goed weg te hou. Ek het 'n platkop gevang en hom met my saag oopgesnipper, en teen sononder kon ek my kampvuur aansteek en begin aandete maak. Daarna het ek 'n lyn gaan stel om vis te vang vir die volgende móre.

Toe dit mooi donker was, het ek by die vuur gaan sit en rook, hoogs in my skik; maar algaande het ek half eensamerig begin voel en toe maar oewer toe geloop om daar te sit en luister na die strome

wat verbyswiep, en die sterre te tel, en die stompe en die vlotte wat verbygedrywe kom; en eindelijk het ek gaan inkruip. Dis die heel beste ding om te doen as jy allenig voel; want mens *bly* nie so nie— jy raak gou daarvan ontslae.

En so't dit toe drie dae en nagte lank voortgeduur. Presies net so, dag vir dag dieselfde. Maar die volgende dag het ek darem begin om die eiland bietjie te verken. Ek was mos baas daar; alles het as't ware aan my behoort en ek wou darem iets meer daaromtrent uitvind; maar bowenal wou ek die tyd omkry. Ek het 'n hele klomp aarbeie raak- geloop, rypes en groenes; en groen somerdruiwe en groen fram- bouse; en die groen brame was net-net aan die uitkom. Mettertyd sou dié goed wel alles hándig te pas kom.

So het ek toe al tussen die digte bosse deurgedwaal tot ek—soos dit vir my gelyk het—nie meer te danig ver van die eiland se onderpunt af kon wees nie. Ek het my geweer by my gehad, maar niks geskiet nie: ek het hom net vir beskerming saamgebring. My plan was om 'n stukkie wild te probeer neertrek wanneer ek eers weer naby die kamp was. Juis toe trap ek so hittete op 'n groterige slang. Die ding kronkel dadelik tussen die gras en blomme in, en ek agterna—ek wil hom mos probeer skiet. 'n Rukkie agtervolg ek hom só, en toe beland ek skielik bo-op die as van 'n vuurtjie wat nog so effens aan die rook is.

My hart spring hier tussen my longe op. Ek wag nie eers om 'n tweede slag te kyk nie, maar laat my geweer sak en skarrel op my tone weg so vinnig as wat ek maar kan. Elke kort-kort gaan staan ek eers tussen die dik blare om 'n oomblik te luister. So hou dit aan en aan. Elke slag as ek 'n boomstomp sien uitsteek, dink ek dis 'n mens; en as ek per ongeluk op 'n takkie trap en hy breek onder my voet, dan voel dit publiek asof iemand een van my asemhalings middeldeer gesny en net die kortste stukkie vir my laat staan het.

Toe ek eindelijk by my kampplek terugkom, het ek glad nie danig kordaat gevoel nie. My maag was maar legerig, maar dit was nie die tyd om te loop kos soek nie. Ek spring net daar en dan aan die werk, karwei al my goed terug

kano toe om hulle uit die pad uit te kry, maak my vuurtjie dood en skop die aweg sodat dit moet lyk na 'n ou vuurmaakplek van láásjaar nog, en toe klouter ek in 'n boom.

Ek was seker goed twee uur daar bo in die boom, maar ek het nie 'n dooie ding gesien nie, en niks gehoor ook nie—ek het my net *verbeel* ek sien en hoor 'n duisend verskillende dinge. Maar ek kon darem ook nie vir altyd daar bo bly nie en naderhand het ek toe maar weer afgeklim, maar gesorg dat ek al in die ruie bos langs hou en heeldyd op my hoede bly. Al wat ek te ete kon kry, was bessies en die bietjie oorskietkos van die more se ontbyt.

Teen die tyd dat dit behoorlik aand was, het my maag geskree van die honger. Sodra dit dus goed donker was, vóór die maan opkom, maak ek dat ek wegroei na Illinois se oewer toe—so 'n kwartmyl ver. Daar's ek die bos in om aandete te maak en ek het net mooi besluit dat ek maar die hele nag daar sou bly, toe ek 'n *kloppetie-klop, kloppetie-klop-géluid* hoor. Perdepote, sê ek by myself. En net daarna hoor ek mensestemme ook. So vinnig as ek kan, laai ek alles terug in die kano en sluip toe deur die bosse om uit te vind wat daar aan die gang is.

Nog voor ek baie ver is, hoor ek 'n man sê: „Ons moet maar hier- langs oorstaan as ons 'n goeie kampplek kry. Die perde is klaar. Kom ons kyk bietjie rond.”

Toe't ek nie langer gewag nie, maar in my skuitjie gewip en gemaklik weggeroei. Ek het maar weer by die óú plek gaan vasmeer en besluit om in die kano te slaap.

Veel slaap het ek nie juis gekry nie: my kop was te propvol gedagtes. Kort-kort het ek wakker geskrik en gedink iemand het my aan die nek beet. Die bietjie slaap het my dus glad nie goed gedoen nie. En naderhand besluit ek toe: kyk, só kan ek nie bly lewe nie. Ek gaan uitvind wie's hier saam met my op die eiland—buig of bars, ek gaan dit doen. Dié besluit het my dadelik laat beter voel.

Ek tel dus dadelik my roeispaan op en skuif so 'n rapsie weg van die wal af sodat die kano tussen die skaduwees inglip. Die maan skyn so helder dat dit buitekant die skaduweekolle nes daglig lyk. Amper 'n uur lank koers ek so stroomaf; alles is doodstil en vas aan die slaap. Teen die tyd was ek amper by die onderkant van die eiland en 'n vaarterige, koel briesie het begin waai—'n duidelike teken dat die nag so te sê verby is. Toe swaai ek die bootjie met die spaan en keer die neus wal toe; ek haal my geweer uit en glip die bos in. Daar gaan ek op 'n houtstomp sit en loer tussen die blare deur. Ek bly maar so sit en kyk hoe die maan sy wagpos verlaat en hoe die donkerte soos 'n kombers oor die rivier begin toevou. Maar kort daarna gewaar ek 'n dowwe skynsel bokant die boomtoppe en weet dat die dag aan die breek is. Toe tel ek weer my geweer op en begin aanstryk na waar ek op daardie kampvuur afgekom het. Elke paar tree gaan ek eers stil- staan en luister. Maar die geluk was skynbaar net nie aan my kant nie, want al wat ek kry, is daardie vuurmaakplek. Tot ek uiteindelik skielik 'n vuurtjie uit die verte tussen die

bome deur sien flikker. Behoedsaam en stadig sluip ek nader tot ek naby genoeg is om te kan sien—en daar gewaar ek ’n man op die grond lê. Dit was genoeg om my die blouaapstuipe te gee. Daar was ’n kombers om sy kop gedraai, en dié was ampertjies binne-in die vuur. Skaars ses voet van horn af sit ek agter ’n plaat bosse en neem nie my oë van hom af nie. Die daglig begin stadigaan gryserig word en na ’n ruk gaap hy ’n slag, rek hom uit en gooi die kombers van hom af—en wie sou dit wees? Juffrou Watson se Jim! Was ek bly om hom te sien!

„Hallo, Jim!” roep ek en wip agter my bos uit.

Hy spring op en gaap my verwilderd aan. Toe val hy op sy knieë, vat sy hande saam en begin soebat: „Moe’ my tog nie seermaak nie, moenie! Ek het nog nooit g’n sjees gehinner nie. Ek het nog altyd van dooi mense gelaai en hulle gehelp so al wat ek kan. Toe, seblief, loop trug rivier toe waar jy hoort en moenie met ou Jim kom lol nie. Ou Jim was nog allietyd jou vriend gewees.”

Nou ja, ek het hom gou-gou oortuig dat ek nie dood is nie. Ek was alte bly om Jim te sien. Nou was ek nie meer allienig nie. Ek het hom ook reguit gesê ek vertrou hom—ek’s glad nie bang hy sal aan die mense loop verklik waar ek is nie. Ek praat een stryk deur, maar hy sit net daar en kyk na my; sê g’n dooie woord nie.

Toe sê ek: „Dis nou goed lig. Kom ons maak kos. Pak jou kamp- vuur weer ’n slag aan.”

„Vir wat moet ek vuurmaak? Om aarbeie en goed te kook? Jy’t mos ’n geweer, hê-jy nie? Dan kan ons beterder kos as aarbeie loop soek.”

„Aarbeie en goed,” herhaal ek. „Is dit waarvan jy lewe?”

„Dis al wat ek kon kry,” antwoord hy.

„Maar hoe lank is jy dan al hier op die eiland, Jim?”

„Ek het gekom die nag net nalat hulle vir jou doodgemaak het.” „Wat? Is jy van toe af al hier?”

„Ja. Is so, ja.”

„En al die tyd het jy niks anders te ete gehad nie?”

„Nee, baas. Niks anders nie.”

„Goeiste, dan moet jy mos nou uitgehonger wees?”

„Dink ek sal ’n perd kan opeet. Dink so, ja. En wanner’t jy hier op die eiland aangekom?”

„Die eerste nag toe ek vermoor is.”

„Nooit! Wattet jy geëet? Maar jy’t mos ’n geweer? Ja-nee, jy’t ’n geweer. Is goed so. Nou loop skiet jy vir ons iets en ek maak die vuur.”

Saam-saam loop ons terug na waar die kano vasgemeer lê. Hy begin daar op ’n oop graskol tussen die bome sy vuur pak, terwyl ek meel en spek en koffie gaan haal, en die koffiekannet en die braaipan en suiker en blikbekers. Dit het Jim skoon die skrik op die lyf geja, want hy was oortuig daarvan dat ek al die goed opgetower het. Ek het boonop nog ’n lekker platkop ook gevang en Jim het hom met sy knipmes skoon- gemaak en gebrui.

Toe die ontbyt klaargemaak voor ons staan, het ons net daar op die gras gaan lê en dit so warm-warm geëet; Jim het met menig weggele, want hy was morsdood honger. En toe hy nou eindelijk knuppeldik was, het hy sommer daar op die gras omgerol en bly lui.

Na 'n rukkie wil hy weet: „Ma' Huck, assit dan nie jý was wat hulle daar innie hut vreggemaak het nie, wie wás dit dan?”

Toe vertel ek hom die hele storie. Piekfyn, het hy gereken: seifs Tom Sawyer, het hy gesê, sou nie 'n beter plan kon gemaak het nie.

Daarna vra ek: „Maar hoe kom jý hier, Jim? Wat het jou hierheen gebring —en hoe't jy hier aangeland?”

Hy lyk taamlik beteuterd en 'n voile minuut lank sê hy niks. Toe eers antwoord hy: „Ek dink ek sê maar liewerster niks.”

„Hoekom dan, Jim?”

„Sommer. Maar jy sal mossie loop klik as ek jou vertel nie, sal jy, Huck?”

„Nog nooit!”

„Nou goed, ek glo jou, Huck. Dan sal ek jou maar vertel. Ek . . . ekket weggehol, sien.”

„Jim!”

„Onthou, jy't gesê jy sallie klik nie. Jy weet dit self, ja: jy't gesê jy sallie klik nie.”

„Ek weet ek het. Ek het so gesê en ek sal woordhou. Sowaar as vet ek sal. Die mense sal my uitskel en my verag as ek dit nie uitblaker nie, maar dit traak my nie. Ek sal nie klik nie, en ek gaan buitendien nie terug huis toe nie. So, nou kan jy my maar die hele storie vertel.”

„Wel, jy sien, die ding het só gekom. Die Oumies, dis nou juf Watson, hou mos aan pik op my, en sy behannel my maar vrot, maar één ding het sy my geblo: sy sal my nooit in Orleans loop ver- koop nie. Maar die laaste ruk het ek gesien da' word alte baie slawe om die dorp laans verkoop en toe beginne ek onrustig raak. Een nag, láát, kruip ek toe deur se kant toe en die deur't so half operig gestaat, en toe hoor ek die Oumies ve'tel virrie wedewee sy gaat my in Orleans verkoop. Sy willie graag nie, seg sy, maar sy kan aghonnerd dollar vir my kry en vir dié hoop geld kan sy nie nee sê nie. Die wedewee hou aan sê sy moenie, maar ekket nie verder geluister nie. Ekket net spore gemaak sonner langer wag, dit sweer ek jou.

„Nou ja, ek hoi toe daar weg, die heuwel af, en ek meen toe ek gaat iewerster bokant die dorp 'n bootjie teen die wal laans gesteel kry. Maar die mense daar was nog wakker en toe kruip ek eers in die vatmaker se linnelam ou winkeltjie weg om te wag lat hulle padgee. En daar sit ek toe heel nag: heelyd was daar iemand naby. Hier ses- uur innie more begin die skuite toe al verbykom, en so teen agt- neënuur toe praat die mense op de leste skuit net van jou pa wat innie dorp kom vertel het lat jy doodgemaak gewóre is. Die laaste klompie skuite was propvol mense wat na die plek wou loop kyk. Pertyslae het hulle eers 'n bietjie teen die wal kom aanle voor hulle oorroe, en dis aan dié geselsery lat ek toe alles van die affere hoor. Ek was tog te

jammer oorlat jy toe nou gevermoor is, Huck, ek sê jou. Maar nou's ek nie meer nie.

„Daar onner die saagsels leg ek toe die ganske dag. Ek was honger ok. Maar g'n stuk bang nie. Ek wis mos die Oumies ennie wedewee gaat net na oggendete biduur toe en dan bly hulle die hele dag weg, en hulle weet ek neem die beste met dagbreek uit veld toe. Hulle sou my glad nie mis voor donkeraand nie. Die anner bediendes ok nie, want nes die oumense uit die pad uit is, dan loop hou hulle mos holidei.

„Nou ja, so teen die aand vat ek toe die rivierpad vir so 'n twee myl of nog meer, tot waar daar g'n inkelte huis meer staat nie. Toe't ek al mooi geweet wat ek ga' doen. Jy sien, bly ek voetslaan, dan gaat die honne my spoor vat. Vat ek 'n skuit en roei oor, dan mis hulle die skuit en dan sal hulle ook mooi weet waarlanges ek gaan land, en dan vat hulle my spoor dáár. Dis die lat ek toe besluit ek soek 'n vlot. Dan los ek g'n spoor nie.

„Na 'n ruk gewaar ek 'n liggie om die draai kom. Toe loop ek innie water in en ek klou net aan 'n boomstomp vas en ek swem oor halfpad tot tussen die dryfhoute in. Ek hou my kop maar half onner- toe en ek swem so skuinserig téén die stroom op tot daar 'n vlot ver- bykom. Ek swem toe tot by sy agterkant en vat hom goed vas. Die wolke het toe net bolanges toegetrek en 'n ruk lank was dit vrek- donker. Ek klim maar op die vlot en loop lê daarop. Die anner mense het al in die middel laans gehou, daar waar die lantêring was. Die rivier was aan die uitswel en die stroom was lekker sterk, toe reken ek ek kan teen vieruur die more 'n goeie vyf-en-twintig myl weg wees. Dan sal ek net voor dagbreek wal toe swenk, Illinois se kant toe, en daar innie bosse inspring.

„Maar aikóna. Ek was net so by die bopunt vannie eiland, toe sien ek iemand met die lantêring agternakom. Dit sou nie help om nog eers te wag nie. Toe gly ek liewerster daatlik van die vlot af en begin uitswem eiland toe. Ek kan mos maar net ytklim waar ek lus kry, dink ek. Maar moenie glo nie. Die wal staan so glykvol met bosse dat ek so waar amper by die onnerpunt van die eiland trek voor ek 'n plekkie sien waar ek kan ytklim. Ek is toe maar die bosse in. So lank hulle daar met die lantêring rondfoeter, sou ek maar die vlotte en goed uitlos. Ekket gelukkig nog my pyp gehad, en 'n stukkie twak, en 'n paar vierietjies in my keps wat droog gebly het, so was ek darem orraait.”

„En toe sit jy die hele tyd sonder brood en vleis ? Hoekom het jy nie waterskilpaaie probeer vang nie?”

„Hoe kry jy die goed innie hanne? Jy kan die ding mos nie bekruipe en hom gryp nie! En met 'n klip kan jy hom nie vrekslaai nie. Hoe doen jy dit innie nag? Ek was nie van plan om my helleroordag op die wal laans te wae nie.”

„Dis waar, ja. Jy moes toe maar heeldyd in die bosse hou. Het jy hulle met die kanon hoor skiet?”

„O ja. Ekket geweet hulle's op soek na jou. Sommer hier naby't ek hulle

sien verbykom. Ekket deur die bossietjies gelê en loer.”

’n Paar klein voëltjies het verbygekom, so wip-wip aan die vlieg, net ’n tree of twee op ’n slag, dan gaan sit hulle weer. Dis ’n teken dat dit gaan reën, het Jim geweet te vertel. Dis wat dit beteken as kuikens so begin vlie, meen hy; en jong voëltjies sê seker dieselfde ding. Ek wou ’n paar van hulle gaan vang, maar Jim wou my nie toelaat nie. Dit het doodsaak beteken. Sy pa was glo een keer kwaai siek en toe’t iemand ’n voël gevang, en sy ou ouma het gesê sy pa sou doodgaan, en hy hét.

Jim wou ook nie hê mens moes die goed tel wat jy vir middagete bymeekaarmaak nie: dit sou ongeluk bring. Jy moes ook nie ’n tafel- doek ná sononder uitskud nie. En hy’t vertel dat as ’n man ’n bye- korf aanhou en hy gaan dood, dan moet jy die bye voor die volgende more daarvan gaan sê, anders gaan hulle almal swak word en ophou werk en vrek. Daarby het Jim ook nog geglo bye steek nie simpel mense nie, maar dít glo ek nie, want ek het al baie keer self gaan probeer en hulle wou my nooit steek nie.

Party van dié stories het ek tevore al gehoor, maar nie almal nie. Jim kon allerhande soorte voorbodes en tekens uitken. Hy’t byna álmal geken, het hy vertel. Maar dit lyk of al die goed net *ongeluk* voorspel, het ek hom een slag gesê, en ek wou weet of daar dan nie ’n klompie gelukkige voortekens ook was nie.

„Net ’n paartjies,” antwoord hy toe. „En hulle’s nikswerd. Vir wat wil jy weet of ’n geluk jou gaat oorkom? Wil jy dit miskien van jou af weghou?” En hy gaan verder: „As jy harige arms en ’n harige bors het, dan’s dit ’n teken lat jy gaan ryk wore. Nou, in so ’n teken is daar darem bietjie nut, want dalk bly jy ’n lang ruk arm en dan kan jy moedeloos raak en nog op ’n dag selfmoord ook pleeg—dis nou as jy nie wéét jy gaat oor ’n ruk ryk wore nie.”

„Het jy harige arms en ’n harige bors, Jim?”

„Vir wat vra jy? Ka’ jy nie sien ek het nie?”

„En is jy miskien ryk?”

„Nee. Maar ek wás een slag ryk gewees en ek gaat wéér ryk wore. Een keer het ek veertien dollar gehad, maar toe’t ek beginne speke- leer en bankrot geraak.”

„Waarmee het jy gespekuleer, Jim?”

„Wel. . . met goed.”

„Watse goed?”

„Lewendige goed. Vee, sien. Ekket tien dollars in ’n koei belê. Maar ek gaat nie wéér my geld in vee steek nie. Want toe loop vrek die ou koei mos mooi.”

„Toe’s jy jou tien dollars kwyt.”

„Nee, nie alles nie. Net nege daarvan. Ekket die vel en goed vir ’n dollar en tien sent verkoop.”

„Toe’t jy altesame nog vyf dollar tien sent oor. Het jy daarmee ook gespekuleer?”

„Ja. Ken jy daai eenbeen-neger van oubaas Bradish? Nou ja, hy’t ’n bank

beginne en gesê elkeen wat een dollar daar kom insit, sal die end van die jaar vier bykry. Al wat neger was, het saamgewerk, maar die meeste het nie juis baie geld gehad nie. Ek was die enigste. Ek besluit toe ek wil méér as vier dollar uit die saak uit maak en ek sê vir hom as ek dit nie kry nie, dan beginne ek self ok 'n bank. Natierlik wou die anner neger my keer, want daar was nie genoeg besigheid vir twee banke nie. Toe sê hy ek ka' maar my vyf dollars insit en dan sal hy my die end van die jaar vyf-en-dertig ytbetaal. En toe maak ek so. Ma' ek besluit ek gaat darie vyf-en-dertig dollars somer daatlik iewerster insteek om die ding aan die gang te hou. Sien, daar was 'n neger met die naam van Bob en hy't 'n platboomskuit vasgelê wat sy baas nie van geweet hettie. Dié't ek toe by hom gekoop en geblo om hom die end van die jaar die vyf-en-dertig dollars te betaal. Maar dieselle nag word die skuit toe gesteel en die volgende more kom vertel die eenbeen-ou sy bank is bankrot. Toe sit ons ammal sonder geld."

„En wat het jy met die laaste tien sent gedoen, Jim?"

„Wel, ek wou dit somer ytgee, maar toe droom ek mos. En die droom sê vir my ek moet die geld vir 'n anner neger gee: sy naam was Bileam. Hulle noem hom gewoonlik somer Bileam-se-donkie vir kort. Hy's altyd aan die lag, sien. Maar hulle't vertel hy's 'n geluk- kige ou en ekket mos klaar gesiet ék issie gelukkig nie. Die droom sê toe: Gee daai tien sent vir Bileam en hy sal dit vir my laat meer wore. Nou ja, hy vat toe die geld, en in die kerk hoor hy die perkant sê as mens iets vir die armes gee, dan leen jy dit vir die Jirre, en later kry jy jou geld honnerd keer oor trug. Toe loop gee Bileam die tien sent vir die armes, en begin wag om te sien wat gaan daarvan wore."

„En wat hét daarvan geword?"

„Niks. Daar't nooit g'n ding van gekom nie. Ek kon die geld nie kry nie en Bileam kon nie. En nou leen ek nie meer geld yt voor ek sekieriteit het nie. Jy kry jou geld honnerd keer oor trug, sê die perkant? Gmf! As ek net die tien *sent* trugkry sal ek tevrede wees en my stêre dank."

„Dis in elk geval orraait, Jim—so lank jy net weer één of ander tyd ryk word."

„Ja. En eintlik is ek *nou* ryk, as ek daaraan dink. Want nou's ek mos my eie baas en ek's aghonnerd dollar werd. As ek net die geld kan hê, dan vra ek niks meer nie."

SECTION 9

I wanted to go and look at a place right about the middle of the island, that I'd found when I was exploring; so we started, and soon got to it, because the island was only three miles long and a quarter of a mile wide.

This place was a tolerable long steep hill or ridge, about forty foot high. We had a rough time getting to the top, the sides was so steep and the bushes so thick. We tramped and clumb around all over it, and by-and-by found a good big cavern in the rock, most up to the top on the side towards Illinois. The cavern was as big as two or three rooms bunched together, and Jim could stand up straight in it. It was cool in there. Jim was for putting our traps in there, right away, but I said we didn't want to be climbing up and down there all the time.

Jim said if we had the canoe hid in a good place, and had all the traps in the cavern, we could rush there if anybody was to come to the island, and they would never find us without dogs. And besides, he said them little birds had said it was going to rain, and did I want the things to get wet?

So we went back and got the canoe and paddled up abreast the cavern, and lugged all the traps up there. Then we hunted up a place close by to hide the canoe in, amongst the thick willows. We took some fish off of the lines and set them again, and begun to get ready for dinner.

The door of the cavern was big enough to roll a hogshead in, and on one side of the door the floor stuck out a little bit and was flat and a good place to build a fire on. So we built it there and cooked dinner.

We spread the blankets inside for a carpet, and eat our dinner in there. We put all the other things handy at the back of the cavern. Pretty soon it darkened up and begun to thunder and lighten; so the birds was right about it. Directly it begun to rain, and it rained like all fury, too, and I never see the wind blow so. It was one of these regular summer storms. It would get so dark that it looked all blue-black outside, and lovely; and the rain would thrash along by so thick that the trees off a little ways looked dim and spider-webby; and here would come a blast of wind that would bend the trees down and turn up the pale underside of the leaves; and then a perfect ripper of a gust would follow along and set the branches to tossing their arms as if they was just wild; and next, when it was just about the bluest and blackest—*fst!* it was as bright as glory and you'd have a little glimpse of tree-tops a-plunging about, away off yonder in the storm, hundreds of yards further than you could see before; dark as sin again in a second, and now you'd hear the thunder let go with an awful crash and then go rumbling, grumbling, tumbling down the sky towards the under side of the world, like rolling empty barrels down stairs, where it's long stairs and they bounce a good deal, you know.

“Jim, this is nice,” I says. “I wouldn't want to be nowhere else but here. Pass me along another hunk of fish and some hot corn-bread.”

“Well, you wouldn't a ben here, 'f it hadn't a ben for

Jim. You'd a ben down dah in de woods widout any dinner, en gittn' mos' drowneded, too, dat you would, honey. Chickens knows when its gwyne to rain, en so do de birds, chile."

The river went on raising and raising for ten or twelve days, till at last it was over the banks. The water was three or four foot deep on the island in the low places and on the Illinois bottom. On that side it was a good many miles wide; but on the Missouri side it was the same old distance across—a half a mile—because the Missouri shore was just a wall of high bluffs.

Daytimes we paddled all over the island in the canoe. It was mighty cool and shady in the deep woods even if the sun was blazing outside. We went winding in and out amongst the trees; and sometimes the vines hung so thick we had to back away and go some other way. Well, on every old broken-down tree, you could see rabbits, and snakes, and such things; and when the island had been overflowed a day or two, they got so tame, on account of being hungry, that you could paddle right up and put your hand on them if you wanted to; but not the snakes and turtles—they would slide off in the water. The ridge our cavern was in, was full of them. We could a had pets enough if we'd wanted them.

One night we caught a little section of a lumber raft—nice pine planks. It was twelve foot wide and about fifteen or sixteen foot long, and the top stood above water six or seven inches, a solid level floor. We could see saw-logs go by in the daylight, sometimes, but we let them go; we didn't show ourselves in daylight.

Another night, when we was up at the head of the island, just before daylight, here comes a frame house down, on the west side. She was a two-story, and tilted over, considerable. We paddled out and got aboard—clumb in at an up-stairs window. But it was too dark to see yet, so we made the canoe fast and set in her to wait for daylight.

The light begun to come before we got to the foot of the island. Then we looked in at the windowⁱ¹⁰. We could make out a bed, and a table, and two old chairs, and lots of things around about on the floor; and there was clothes hanging against the wall. There was something laying on the floor in the far corner that looked like a man. So Jim says:

“Hello, you!”

But it didn’t budge. So I hollered again, and then Jim says:

“De man ain’t asleep—he’s dead. You hold still—I’ll go en see.”

He went and bent down and looked, and says:

“It’s a dead man. Yes, indeedy; naked, too. He’s been shot in de back. I reck’n he’s been dead two er three days. Come in, Huck, but doan’ look at his face—it’s too gashly.”

I didn’t look at him at all. Jim throwed some old rags over him, but he needn’t done it; I didn’t want to see him. There was heaps of old greasy cards scattered around over the floor, and old whisky bottles, and a couple of masks made out of black cloth; and all over

the walls was the ignorantest kind of words and pictures^{e1}, made with charcoal. There was two old dirty calico dresses, and a sun-bonnet, and some women's underclothes, hanging against the wall, and some men's clothing too. We put the lot into the canoe; it might come good. There was a boy's old speckled straw hat on the floor; I took that too. And there was a bottle that had had milk in it; and it had a rag stopper for a baby to suck. We would a took the bottle, but it was broke. There was a seedy old chest, and an old hair trunk with the hinges broke. They stood open, but there warn't nothing left in them that was any account. The way things was scattered about, we reckoned the people left in a hurry and warn't fixed so as to carry off most of their stuff.

We got an old tin lantern, and a butcher knife without any handle, and a bran-new Barlow knife worth two bits in any store, and a lot of tallow candles, and a tin candlestick, and a gourd, and a tin cup, and a ratty old bed-quilt off the bed, and a reticule with needles and pins and beeswax and buttons and thread and all such truck in it, and a hatchet and some nails, and a fish-line as thick as my little finger, with some monstrous hooks on it, and a roll of buckskin, and a leather dog-collar, and a horse-shoe, and some vials of medicine that didn't have no label on them; and just as we was leaving I found a tolerable good curry-comb^{e2}, and Jim he found a ratty old fiddle-bow, and a wooden leg. The straps was broke off of it, but barring that, it was a good enough leg, though it was too long for me and not long enough for Jim, and we couldn't find the other one, though we hunted all around.

And so, take it all around, we made a good haul. When

we was ready to shove off, we was a quarter of a mile below the island, and it was pretty broad day; so I made Jim lay down in the canoe and cover up with the quilt, because if he set up, people could tell he was a nigger a good ways off. I paddled over to the Illinois shore, and drifted down most a half a mile doing it. I crept up the dead water under the bank, and hadn't no accidents and didn't see nobody. We got home all safe.

Chapter 9

Ek wou 'n slag gaan kyk na 'n plek mooi in die middel van die eiland wat ek op my ontdekkingstogte raakgeloop het, dus is ons soontoe; en omdat die eiland maar net drie myl lank en 'n kwartmyl breed was, was ons gou-gou daar,

Dié plek was 'n taamlike steil heuwel of rif, so 'n veertig voet hoog. Ons het maar gesukkel om bo uit te kom, want die kante was steil en die bosse ruig. Daar't ons die wêreld platgeloop en orals rondge- kouter tot ons aan die Illinois-kant, amper heel bo, 'n lekker groot grot in die rotse ontdek het. Dit was so groot soos twee of drie kamer: saam en Jim kon regop daarin staan. Dit was heerlik koel binnekant. Jim wou sommer daar en dan ons pakaas soontoe kar- wei, maar ek het daar 'n stokkie voor gesteeek: mens wou darem nie aanhou op- en afklim nie.

Jim Let egter nie kopgegee nie: as ons die kano goed wegsteek, het hy gesê, en ons pak al ons goed daar in die grot, dan kan ons soontoe vlug nes daar iemand op die eiland land; niemand sal ons ooit sonder honde daar opspoor nie. Buitendien, die klein voëltjies het mos ver- tel dat die reën aan die kom is: wou ek miskien hê ons goed moet alles nat word ? Dus is ons tog maar terug, en toe met die kano roei- roei al met die eiland langs tot regoor die grot; daar't ons vasmeeer en ons goed boontoe gedra. Daarna het ons 'n skuilplek in die nabyheid gaan soek om die kano in te bêre, weggesteek tussen die digte wilgers. Ons het 'n paar visse van die lyne afgehaal en die goed weer opgestel, en toe begin middagete maak.

Die komberse het ons binnekant oopgegooi vir 'n tapyt, en ons ete daarop gaan sit en eet. Al die ander goed het ons teen die grot se agterkant opgestawel, maklik byderhand. Sommer vroeg-vroeg het dit begin donker word en dit het begin donder en blits: die voëltjies was dus heeltemal reg. Net daarna begin die reën te val en dit stroom in emmersvol grond toe, en sowat van 'n wind het ek nog nooit sien waai nie. Dit was 'n behoorlike somerstorm.

Dan word dit mos so donker dat dit buitekant skoon blouswart lyk—tog te mooi. En die reën val so hard en dig dat die bome hier naby mens dof en spinne- rakkerig lyk; en dan kom daar ’n vlaag wind wat die bome ombuig en die blekerige onderkant van die blare laat wys. Net daarna kom ’n stormwind aangeswiep en hy ruk en pluk die bome se arms so kwaai heen en weer dat hulle soos wilde goed lyk. En dan, nes alles op sy blouste en swartste is, dan sjipl! is dit skielik verby en dis so lig soos die hemel self, en doer in die verte kan jy die boomtoppe in die storm sien ronddans, honderde tree verder as wat jy tevore kon sien; somer so handomkeer is dit weer so donker soos die hel en jy hoor die donder met ’n verskriklike slag lostrek, en dan dreun en rammel dit tuimel-tuimel weg na die wêreld se onderkant, nes ’n leë vaatjie wat jy teen ’n trap af rol—dis nou as die trap taamlk lank is en die ding bokspring behoorlik.

„Jinne, Jim, maar dis lekker,” sê ek. „Ek sal so waar op g’n ander plek in die wye wêreld wil wees as net hier nie. Gee my nog ’n stuk vis aan, jong, en van daardie warm koringbrood.”

„Hm, assit nie was vir ou Jim nie, dan was jy ok nie hier nie. Dan was jy da’ onner innie bosse sonner kos. En lat ek vir jou sê: jy sou so ampertjies geversuip het ok. Ja-nee, boeta, kuikens weet wanneer die reent aankom—en voëltjies weet dit ok.”

Tien, twaalf dae lank het die rivier al voller en voller geword tot dit later oor die walle begin stoot het.

Op die eiland se laagste plekke en aan Illinois se onderkant het die water drie of vier voet diep gelê. Diékant het die rivier myle der myle breed gelê, maar aan die Missouri-kant was dit nog net soos altyd—’n halfmyl—want daardie kant is die oewer mos net een lang loodregte wal.

Bedags het ons met die kano oor die hele eiland geroei. Dit was heerliksalig koel en vol skaduwees daar in die bosse, seifs as die son helder daarbuite geskyn het. Dan’t ons al tussen die bome deurgevleg en plek-plek was die rankplante so dig dat ons eers moes terugstoot en ’n ander pad soek. In elke ou droë, gebreekte boom kon mens konyne en slange en sulke goed sien, en ná die eiland ’n dag of twee so onder water was, het die goed van skone honger so mak geword dat jy tot by hulle kon roei en aan hulle kon raak as jy wou—dareem nie die slange en waterskilpaaie nie, want hulle’t baie gou in die water ingeglip. Daar op die rif waar ons grot was, was dit vervuil van hulle. Ons kon meer as genoeg troeteldiere makgemaak het as ons hulle wou hê.

Een nag het ons ’n stuk van ’n houtvlot uit die water gevis: lekker dennebalk. Die ding was sowat twaalf voet breed en vyftien, sestien voet lank, en die bokant het ’n goeie ses, sewe duim bo die water uitgesteek soos ’n soliede, gelyk vloer. Bedags kon ons dikwels ge- saagde stompe ook sien verbykom, dog ons het hulle maar laat af- dryf, want ons wou dit nie oordag buite waag nie.

’n Ander nag was ons kort voor dagbreek hier aan die bokant van die

eiland toe daar 'n huisstellasie aan die westekant verbykom. Dit was 'n tweeverdieping huis en hy't sterk oorgehel. Ons het soontoe geroei en deur een van die boonste verdieping se vensters ingeklouter, maar dit was nog te donker om iets te gewaar; dus het ons solank die kano vasgemaak en daarin gaan sit en wag dat die dag moet breek.

Nog voor ons die eiland se onderpunt bereik het, het dit begin lig word.

Toe't ons deur die venster gaan inloer. Binne kon ons 'n bed, 'n tafel, twee ou stoele en 'n hoop ander goed op die vloer gewaar, en teen die muur het daar klere gehang. In die verste hoek het daar iets op die vloer gelê wat na 'n mens gelyk het.

„Haai, jy daar!” roep Jim toe.

Maar hy roer nie. Toe roep ék weer. Maar eindelijk sê Jim:

„Daai man slaap g'n. Hy's dood. Bly jy hier. Ek sal loop kyk.”

Hy klouter in, gaan buk daar by die man om hom van naderby te beskou, en sê: „Dis 'n dooi man. Dood, morsdood; en kaal daarby. Hy't 'n skoot innie rug gekry. Ek skat hy's al twee, drie dae dood.

Kom klim maar in, Huck, ma' moenie na sy gesig kyk nie: dit lyk alte naar.”

Ek het glad nie na sy kant toe gekyk nie. Jim het hom met 'n paar stukke ou klere toegegooi, maar dit was nie eers nodig nie, want ek had g'n lus om na hom te kyk nie. Oral oor die vloer het daar 'n spul smerige ou speelkaarte rondgelê, en ou whiskybottels en 'n paar maskers van swart lap; en al die mure was bekrap met die simpelste spul woorde en tekeninge wat jy jou kan voorstel, alles in houtskool. Teen die muur het daar twee vuil katoenrokke gehang, en 'n son- kappie en vrouensonderklere, en 'n klompie mansklere ook. Ons het maar die hele spul in die kano gepak—mens kon dit dalk nog goed gebruik, wie wêet. Op die vloer het daar 'n seun se gespikkelde ou strooihoed gelê—dié't ek ook geneem. En verder was daar 'n bottel met melk, toegestop met 'n vadoekprop vir 'n baba om aan te suig. Ons wou die bottel saamneem, maar dit was stukkend. Daar was 'n verinnuweerde ou kas en 'n trommel met stukkende skarniere. Altwee het oopgestaan, maar daar was niks waardevols in nie. Te oordeel na die manier waarop die goed rondgelê het, moes die mense taamlik haastig gemaak het dat hulle wegkom sonder om juis te probeer om al hulle goed saam te neem.

Ons het 'n ou bliklantern ook raakgeloop, en 'n slagtersmes sonder handvat, en 'n spiksplinternuwe Barlow-mes waarvoor jy in enige winkel twee dollar sou kon losslaan. Verder nog 'n hele klomp vet- kerse; 'n blikblaker; 'n karba; 'n blikbeker; 'n motgevrete ou vere- kombers op die bed; 'n werksak vol spelde en naalde en byewas en knope en gare en sulke goed; 'n byl en 'n paar spykers; 'n vislyn so dik soos my pinkie met 'n paar gruwelike hoeke aan die punt; 'n rol bokvel; 'n leerhalsband vir 'n hond; 'n perdeskoen; en 'n klompie medisynebottels sonder etikette. En met die padgee kry ek toe nog boonop 'n skaflike roskam, en Jim 'n voos ou strykstok en 'n hout- been. Die riempies en gespes was af, maar behalwe dit was dit glad nie 'n onaardige been nie, al was dit dan te lank vir my en te kort vir Jim; ons kon ook nie sy

maat kry nie, hoe ons ook al gesoek het.

G'n slegte oes nie, as mens die hele lot bymekaartel. Toe ons einde-lik reg was om spore te maak, was ons al 'n kwartmyl by die eiland verby en dit was helder dag; dus het ek Jim maar laat plat lê in die kano en hom met die verekombers toegegooi, want as hy regop bly sit het, sou mens van ver af al kon sien dat hy 'n neger was. Ek het na die Illinois-kant toe oorgeroei en 'n goeie halfmyl afgedryf in die proses. Daar't ons in die stil water langs die oewer ingeswenk en g'n ongevalle op die lyf geloop nie en niemand gesien nie. Veilig het ons tuisgekom.

SECTION 10

After breakfast I wanted to talk about the dead man and guess out how he come to be killed, but Jim didn't want to. He said it would fetch bad luck; and besides, he said, he might come and ha'nt us; he said a man that warn't buried was more likely to go a-ha'nting around than one that was planted and comfortable. That sounded pretty reasonable, so I didn't say no more; but I couldn't keep from studying over it and wishing I knowed who shot the man, and what they done it for.

We rummaged the clothes we'd got, and found eight dollars in silver sewed up in the lining of an old blanket overcoat. Jim said he reckoned the people in that house stole the coat, because if they'd a knowed the money was there they wouldn't a left it. I said I reckoned they killed him, too; but Jim didn't want to talk about that. I says:

"Now you think it's bad luck; but what did you say when I fetched in the snake-skin that I found on the top of the ridge day before yesterday? You said it was the worst bad luck in the world to touch a snake-skin with my hands. Well, here's your bad luck! We've raked in all this truck and eight dollars besides. I wish we could have some bad luck like this every day, Jim."

"Never you mind, honey, never you mind. Don't you git too peart. It's a-comin'. Mind I tell you, it's a-comin'."

It did come, too. It was a Tuesday that we had that

talk. Well, after dinner Friday, we was laying around in the grass at the upper end of the ridge, and got out of tobacco. I went to the cavern to get some, and found a rattlesnake in there. I killed him, and curled him up on the foot of Jim's blanket, ever so natural, thinking there'd be some fun when Jim found him there. Well, by night I forgot all about the snake, and when Jim flung himself down on the blanket while I struck a light, the snake's mate was there, and bit him.

He jumped up yelling, and the first thing the light showed was the varmint curled up and ready for another spring. I laid him out in a second with a stick, and Jim grabbed pap's whisky jug and begun to pour it down.

He was barefooted, and the snake bit him right on the heel. That all comes of my being such a fool as to not remember that wherever you leave a dead snake its mate always comes there and curls around it^{e1}. Jim told me to chop off the snake's head and throw it away, and then skin the body and roast a piece of it. I done it, and he eat it and said it would help cure him. He made me take off the rattles and tie them around his wrist, too. He said that that would help. Then I slid out quiet and throwed the snakes clear away amongst the bushes; for I warn't going to let Jim find out it was all my fault, not if I could help it.

Jim sucked and sucked at the jug, and now and then he got out of his head and pitched around and yelled; but every time he come to himself he went to sucking at the jug again. His foot swelled up pretty big, and so did his leg; but by-and-by the drunk begun to come, and so I judged he was all right; but I'd druther been bit

with a snake than pap's whisky.

Jim was laid up for four days and nights. Then the swelling was all gone and he was around again. I made up my mind I wouldn't ever take ahold of a snake-skin again with my hands, now that I see what had come of it. Jim said he reckoned I would believe him next time. And he said that handling a snake-skin was such awful bad luck that maybe we hadn't got to the end of it yet. He said he druther see the new moon over his left shoulder as much as a thousand times than take up a snake-skin in his hand. Well, I was getting to feel that way myself, though I've always reckoned that looking at the new moon over your left shoulder is one of the carelessest and foolishhest things a body can do. Old Hank Bunker done it once, and bragged about it; and in less than two years he got drunk and fell off of the shot tower and spread himself out so that he was just a kind of a layer, as you may say; and they slid him edgeways between two barn doors for a coffin, and buried him so, so they say, but I didn't see it. Pap told me. But anyway, it all come of looking at the moon that way, like a fool.

Well, the days went along, and the river went down between its banks again; and about the first thing we done was to bait one of the big hooks with a skinned rabbit and set it and catch a cat-fish that was as big as a man^{e2}, being six foot two inches long, and weighed over two hundred pounds. We couldn't handle him, of course; he would a flung us into Illinois. We just set there and watched him rip and tear around till he drowned. We found a brass button in his stomach, and a round ball, and lots of rubbage. We split the ball open with the hatchet, and there was a spool in it. Jim

said he'd had it there a long time, to coat it over so and make a ball of it. It was as big a fish as was ever caught in the Mississippi, I reckon. Jim said he hadn't ever seen a bigger one. He would a been worth a good deal over at the village. They peddle out such a fish as that by the pound in the market house there; everybody buys some of him; his meat's as white as snow and makes a good fry.

Next morning I said it was getting slow and dull, and I wanted to get a stirring up, some way. I said I reckoned I would slip over the river and find out what was going on. Jim liked that notion; but he said I must go in the dark and look sharp. Then he studied it over and said, couldn't I put on some of them old things and dress up like a girl^{e3}? That was a good notion, too. So we shortened up one of the calico gowns and I turned up my trowser-legs to my knees and got into it. Jim hitched it behind with the hooksⁱ¹¹, and it was a fair fit. I put on the sun-bonnet and tied it under my chin, and then for a body to look in and see my face was like looking down a joint of stove-pipe. Jim said nobody would know me, even in the daytime, hardly. I practiced around all day to get the hang of the things, and by-and-by I could do pretty well in them, only Jim said I didn't walk like a girl; and he said I must quit pulling up my gown to get at my britches pocket. I took notice, and done better.

I started up the Illinois shore in the canoe just after dark.

I started across to the town from a little below the ferry landing, and the drift of the current fetched me in at the bottom of the town. I tied up and started along the

bank. There was a light burning in a little shanty that hadn't been lived in for a long time, and I wondered who had took up quarters there. I slipped up and peeped in at the window. There was a woman about forty year old in there, knitting by a candle that was on a pine table. I didn't know her face; she was a stranger, for you couldn't start a face in that town that I didn't know. Now this was lucky, because I was weakening; I was getting afraid I had come; people might know my voice and find me out. But if this woman had been in such a little town two days she could tell me all I wanted to know; so I knocked at the door, and made up my mind I wouldn't forget I was a girl.

Chapter 10

NÁ ontbyt wou ek graag 'n slag oor die dooie man praat en probeer uitvind hoe hy vermoor is, maar Jim wou van niks weet nie. Dit sou net 'n ongeluk oor ons laat kom, het hy gesê; en buitendien kon dit dalk maak dat die man by ons kom spook, want iemand wat nie begrawe was nie, kon alte maklik begin lol met mense wat op hul dooie gemak gevestig was. Dit het taamlik oor- tuigend geklink en toe't ek maar niks verder gesê nie; maar ek kon nie help om oor die saak te bly dink en te wonder wie die man doodge- skiet het, en hoekom nie.

Ons het die klere wat ons buitgemaak het, begin deursnuffel, en agt dollars gekry, alles in silwer, netjies toegewerk in die voering van 'n dik ou oorjas. Jim was daarvan oortuig dat die huis se mense die jas gesteel het, want as hulle geweet het van die geld in die voering, dan sou hulle dit nooit laat agterbly het nie; ék het boonop gedink dat hulle die man vermoor het ook—maar Jim wou nog steeds nie daar- oor praat nie.

„Jy dink nou miskien dis ongelukkig om daaroor te praat,” sê ek. „Maar wat het jy gesê toe ek eergister die slangvel daar aan die bokant van die rif gekry het en dit huis toe gebring het? Toe't jy my wysgemaak dis die ongelukkigste ding op aarde om 'n slangvel met 'n mens se hande aan te raak. Nou toe: hier's jou ,ongeluk' nou voor jou! Ons het al dié goed gestroop, en agt dollars boonop. Ek sal nie omgee as ek elke dag só 'n ,ongeluk' kan oorkom nie, Jim!”

„Toe maar, jong, toe maar. Moet jy maar nie te gems wóre nie. Dit kom

nog. Hoor wat ek vir jou seg: dit *kom*.”

En dit hét gekom ook. Dit was 'n Dinsdag toe ons só gesit en praat het. Nou ja, die Vrydag lê ons ná middagete op die gras daar aan die bopunt van die rif en ons ontdek dat ons twak gedaan is. Ek loop toe terug grot toe om nog te gaan haal, en daar kry ek 'n ratel- slang. Ek het hom doodgemaak en hom netjies by Jim se voetenent gaan oprol sodat hy nog springlewendig lyk: die aand sou ons nou bietjie sports hê as Jim hom daar kry, dog ek. Maar teen die aand het ek skoon van die slang vergeet en toe Jim daar op sy kombers loop lê terwyl ek besig is om lig te maak, toe't die slang se maat mooi ook soontoe gekom. En hy pik vir Jim.

Hy spring daar op en begin te skree, en die eerste ding waar die lig op val, is einste die dierasie wat daar opgekrul lê, reg om weer te spring. Ek gryp 'n stok en slaat hom mordsdood. Intussen kry Jim Pa se whiskykan beet en begin sluk so al wat hy kan.

Hy was kaalvoet en die slang het hom mooi op die hak gepik. Dit kom toe alles van my onnoselheid: ek moet mos gewéét het 'n dooie slang se maat kom altyd agterna en krul óm hom op. Jim het my dadelik die slang se kop laat afkap en wegsmyt; daarna moes ek die lyf afslag en 'n stuk daarvan braai. Ek het so gemaak, en dié stuk het hy toe geëet: dit sou glo help om hom gesond te maak. Verder moes ek die slang se ratels ook afsny en dit aan sy pols vasbind, want dit sou óók help. Daarna het ek stilletjies uitgeglim en die slange doer in die bosse ingesmyt, want ek sou om die dood nie vir Jim laat agter- kom dat dit alles my skuld was nie.

Jim het bly sluk en sluk aan die kan, en af en toe half gek geraak en begin rondspring en skreeu; maar nes hy weer by sy positiewe is, begin hy maar weer drink. Sy voet het sleg opgeswel; sy been ook. Maar stadigaan het hy begin dronk word en toe't ek besluit hy's weer reg. Maar dit moet ek sê: ek word liever deur 'n slang gebyt as deur Pa se whisky.

Jim was vier dae en nagte lank siek. Toe het die swelsel gesak en hy was weer op die been. Ek het by myselfers besluit om nooit weer 'n slangvel met 'n vinger aan te raak as ek dit kan verhelp nie: ek het mos nou gesien wat kom daarvan. En Jim het gesê ek sou hom dalk nou die volgende keer glo as hy my waarsku. Buitendien was dit só 'n gevaarlike ding om aan 'n slangvel te raak, dat ons dalkies nog nie die end van die storie belewe het nie. Hy sou liever die nuwemaan 'n duisend keer oor sy linkerskouer sien skyn as om één keer 'n slangvel op te tel. Nou, teen dié tyd het ek self ook al so begin dink, al het ek nog altyd gedink dis een van die verspotste en agtelosigste dinge wat mens kán doen om oor jou linkerskouer na die nuwemaan te kyk. Ou Hank Bunker het dit mos 'n slag gedoen en toe daaroor begin groot- praat; en skaars twee jaar daarna het hy eenkeer dronk geword en bo van die wagtoring afgeval, so plat soos 'n pannekoek; en hulle't hom glo sommer so skuins-skuins tussen twee waenhuisdeure ingeskuiwe vir 'n doodkis, en hom so begrawe. Dis wat daar vertel word, maar ek het dit nou nie self gesê nie. Pa het my die ding vertel. Maar dis in elk geval wat daarvan kom as mens so

simpel is om op dié manier na die maan te kyk.

Nou ja, die dae het verbygegaan en die rivier het weer begin sak tussen sy walle. En omtrent die eerste ding wat ons toe gedoen het, was om 'n afgeslagte konyn te gebruik as aas aan een van die groot hoeke wat ons buitgemaak het; en daarmee het ons 'n platkop so groot soos 'n grootman gevang—ses voet twee duim lank en goed oor die tweehonderd pond swaar. Ons kon hom natuurlik nie met geweld uitbring nie—hy sou ons gegooi het dat ons tot binne-in Illinois trek. Ons het maar net daar gesit en kyk hoe hy spook en spartel totdat hy uiteindelik versuip het. In sy maag het ons 'n koperknoop gekry, en 'n ronde bal, en 'n hele spul gemors. Die bal het ons met die byl oop- gekap en 'n spoel binne-in gekry. Dit moes 'n hengse lang ruk daar in sy pens gelê het om só aan te pak en 'n bal te vorm, het Jim gesê. Dit was seker maklik een van die grootste visse wat daar nog ooit in die Mississippi gevang is. Jim het self gesê hy't nog nooit 'n groter een gesien het. Hy sou daar oorkant in die dorp sommer heelwat werd gewees het, want sulke visse verkoop hulle mos per pond op die mark; 'n hele klomp mense koop elkeen 'n stukkie. Hy't 'n spierwit vleis wat alte lekker braai.

Die volgende móre het ek vir Jim gesê die lewe raak darem nou alte vervelig en langdradig; ek was lus vir 'n bietjie opwinding. Ek wou weer 'n slag die rivier oorsteek en gaan kyk wat daar oorkant aan- gaan. Die plan het Jim nogal aangestaan, maar hy't gesê ek moet eers wag vir die donker en dan goed in my pasoppens bly. Hy't die saak 'n ruk oordink en toe gevra: kon ek nie iets van daardie spul ou klere aantrek en maak of ek 'n meisiekind is nie? Dit was nou rêrig 'n goeie plan. Net daar en dan het ons een van die twee katoenrokke korter gemaak, en toe't ek my broekspype tot by my knieë opgerol en die rok aangetrek. Jim het die hakies aan die agterkant vasgemaak en dit het sommer goed gepas. Ek het die kappie opgesit en die band- jies onder my ken vasgeknoop. As mens nou sou probeer om onder dié tuit in te loer en my gesig te sien, sou dit publiek wees of jy deur 'n stuk stoofpyp kyk. G'n mens sou my herken nie, het Jim gesê—nie eers helder oordag nie. Die hele dag lank het ek geoefen om gewoon te raak aan die klere en na 'n rukkie nogal goed reggekom—net Jim het gesê ek loop nog nie soos 'n meisiekind nie. Hy't ook gesê ek moet ophou my rok optrek om my broeksak by te kom. Ek het so gemaak en toe't dit sommer baie beter begin gaan.

Net ná sonder het ek in die kano koers gekry al langs die Illinois-oewer op. Skuins onderkant die pont het ek oorgesteek dorp se kant toe en die sterk stroom het my kort duskant die dorp aan wal gebring. Daar't ek vasmeeer en begin aanstryk. In 'n klein pon- dokkie wat baie lank leeg gestaan het, het daar dié aand lig gebrand. Ek het gewonder wie daar kon ingetrek het, en nader gesluip om deur 'n venster te loer. Binnekant was daar 'n vrou van so veertig, aan't brei by 'n kers wat op 'n houttafel gestaan het. Haar gesig het ek glad nie geken nie; sy was dus 'n vreemdeling, want daar was g'n mens in daardie dorp wat ék nie van sien geken het nie. Dit was 'n geluuskoot, want my moed het begin min raak: ek het skrikkerig begin voel oor my kommerie—

nou-nou herken iemand my stem en betrap my. Net twee dae in dié klein dorpie sou egter vir die vrou oorgenoeg wees om my alles te vertel wat ek graag wou weet. Dus het ek aan die deur geklop, vas van plan om te onthou dat ek 'n meisiekind is.

SECTION 11

“Come in,” says the woman, and I did. She says:

“Take a cheer.”

I done it. She looked me all over with her little shiny eyes, and says:

“What might your name be?”

“Sarah Williams^{e1}.”

“Where 'bouts do you live? In this neighborhood?”

“No'm. In Hookerville^{e2}, seven mile below. I've walked all the way and I'm all tired out.”

“Hungry, too, I reckon. I'll find you something.”

“No'm, I ain't hungry. I was so hungry I had to stop two mile below here at a farm; so I ain't hungry no more. It's what makes me so late. My mother's down sick, and out of money and everything, and I come to tell my uncle Abner Moore. He lives at the upper end of the town, she says. I hain't ever been here before. Do you know him?”

“No; but I don't know everybody yet. I haven't lived here quite two weeks. It's a considerable ways to the upper end of the town. You better stay here all night. Take off your bonnet.”

“No,” I says, “I'll rest a while, I reckon, and go on. I ain't afeard of the dark.”

She said she wouldn't let me go by myself, but her husband would be in by-and-by, maybe in a hour and a half, and she'd send him along with me. Then she got to talking about her husband, and about her relations up the river, and her relations down the river, and about how much better off they used to was, and how they didn't know but they'd made a mistake coming to our town, instead of letting well alone—and so on and so on, till I was afeard I had made a mistake coming to her to find out what was going on in the town; but by-and-by she dropped onto pap and the murder, and then I was pretty willing to let her clatter right along. She told about me and Tom Sawyer finding the six thousand dollars (only she got it ten) and all about pap and what a hard lot he was, and what a hard lot I was, and at last she got down to where I was murdered. I says:

“Who done it? We’ve heard considerable about these goings on, down in Hookerville, but we don’t know who ’twas that killed Huck Finn.”

“Well, I reckon there’s a right smart chance of people *here* that ’d like to know who killed him. Some thinks old Finn done it himself.”

“No—is that so?”

“Most everybody thought it at first. He’ll never know how nigh he come to getting lynched. But before night they changed around and judged it was done by a runaway nigger named Jim.”

“Why *he*——”

I stopped. I reckoned I better keep still. She run on,

and never noticed I had put in at all.

“The nigger run off the very night Huck Finn was killed. So there’s a reward out for him—three hundred dollars. And there’s a reward out for old Finn too—two hundred dollars. You see, he come to town the morning after the murder, and told about it, and was out with ’em on the ferry-boat hunt, and right away after he up and left. Before night they wanted to lynch him, but he was gone, you see. Well, next day they found out the nigger was gone; they found out he hadn’t ben seen sence ten o’clock the night the murder was done. So then they put it on him, you see, and while they was full of it, next day back comes old Finn and went boo-hooing to Judge Thatcher to get money to hunt for the nigger all over Illinois with. The judge give him some, and that evening he got drunk and was around till after midnight with a couple of mighty hard looking strangers, and then went off with them. Well, he hain’t come back sence, and they ain’t looking for him back till this thing blows over a little, for people thinks now that he killed his boy and fixed things so folks would think robbers done it, and then he’d get Huck’s money without having to bother a long time with a lawsuit. People do say he warn’t any too good to do it. Oh, he’s sly, I reckon. If he don’t come back for a year, he’ll be all right. You can’t prove anything on him, you know; everything will be quieted down then, and he’ll walk into Huck’s money as easy as nothing.”

“Yes, I reckon so, ’m. I don’t see nothing in the way of it. Has everybody quit thinking the nigger done it?”

“Oh, no, not everybody. A good many thinks he done it. But they’ll get the nigger pretty soon, now, and

maybe they can scare it out of him.”

“Why, are they after him yet?”

“Well, you’re innocent, ain’t you! Does three hundred dollars lay round every day for people to pick up? Some folks thinks the nigger ain’t far from here. I’m one of them—but I hain’t talked it around. A few days ago I was talking with an old couple that lives next door in the log shanty, and they happened to say hardly anybody ever goes to that island over yonder that they call Jackson’s Island. Don’t anybody live there? says I. No, nobody, says they. I didn’t say any more, but I done some thinking. I was pretty near certain I’d seen smoke over there, about the head of the island, a day or two before that, so I says to myself, like as not that nigger’s hiding over there; anyway, says I, it’s worth the trouble to give the place a hunt. I hain’t seen any smoke sence, so I reckon maybe he’s gone, if it was him; but husband’s going over to see—him and another man. He was gone up the river; but he got back to-day and I told him as soon as he got here two hours ago.”

I had got so uneasy I couldn’t set still. I had to do something with my hands; so I took up a needle off of the table and went to threading it. My hands shook, and I was making a bad job of it. When the woman stopped talking, I looked up, and she was looking at me pretty curious, and smiling a little. I put down the needle and thread and let on to be interested—and I was, too—and says:

“Three hundred dollars is a power of money. I wish my mother could get it. Is your husband going over there

to-night?”

“Oh, yes. He went up town with the man I was telling you of, to get a boat and see if they could borrow another gun. They’ll go over after midnight.”

“Couldn’t they see better if they was to wait till daytime?”

“Yes. And couldn’t the nigger see better, too? After midnight he’ll likely be asleep, and they can slip around through the woods and hunt up his camp fire all the better for the dark, if he’s got one.”

“I didn’t think of that.”

The woman kept looking at me pretty curious, and I didn’t feel a bit comfortable. Pretty soon she says:

“What did you say your name was, honey?”

“M—Mary Williams.”

Somehow it didn’t seem to me that I said it was Mary before, so I didn’t look up; seemed to me I said it was Sarah; so I felt sort of cornered, and was afeared maybe I was looking it, too. I wished the woman would say something more; the longer she set still, the uneasier I was. But now she says:

“Honey, I thought you said it was Sarah when you first come in?”

“Oh, yes’m, I did. Sarah Mary Williams. Sarah’s my first name. Some calls me Sarah, some calls me Mary.”

“Oh, that’s the way of it?”

“Yes’m.”

I was feeling better, then, but I wished I was out of there, anyway. I couldn’t look up yet.

Well, the woman fell to talking about how hard times was, and how poor they had to live, and how the rats was as free as if they owned the place, and so forth, and so on, and then I got easy again. She was right about the rats. You’d see one stick his nose out of a hole in the corner every little while. She said she had to have things handy to throw at them when she was alone, or they wouldn’t give her no peace. She showed me a bar of lead, twisted up into a knot, and said she was a good shot with it generly, but she’d wrenched her arm a day or two ago, and didn’t know whether she could throw true, now. But she watched for a chance, and directly she banged away at a rat, but she missed him wide, and said “Ouch!” it hurt her arm so. Then she told me to try for the next one. I wanted to be getting away before the old man got back, but of course I didn’t let on. I got the thing, and the first rat that showed his nose I let drive, and if he’d a stayed where he was he’d a been a tolerable sick rat. She said that that was first-rate, and she reckoned I would hive the next one. She went and got the lump of lead and fetched it back and brought along a hank of yarn, which she wanted me to help her with. I held up my two hands and she put the hank over them and went on talking about her and her husband’s matters. But she broke off to say:

“Keep your eye on the rats. You better have the lead in

your lap, handy.”

So she dropped the lump into my lap, just at that moment, and I clapped my legs together on it and she went on talking. But only about a minute. Then she took off the hank and looked me straight in the face, but very pleasant, and says:

“Come, now—what’s your real name?”

“Wh-what, mum?”

“What’s your real name? Is it Bill, or Tom, or Bob?—or what is it?”

I reckon I shook like a leaf, and I didn’t know hardly what to do. But I says:

“Please to don’t poke fun at a poor girl like me, mum. If I’m in the way, here, I’ll——”

“No, you won’t. Set down and stay where you are. I ain’t going to hurt you, and I ain’t going to tell on you, nuther. You just tell me your secret, and trust me. I’ll keep it; and what’s more, I’ll help you. So’ll my old man, if you want him to. You see, you’re a runaway ’prentice—that’s all. It ain’t anything. There ain’t any harm in it. You’ve been treated bad, and you made up your mind to cut. Bless you, child, I wouldn’t tell on you. Tell me all about it, now—that’s a good boy.”

So I said it wouldn’t be no use to try to play it any longer, and I would just make a clean breast and tell her everything, but she mustn’t go back on her promise. Then I told her my father and mother was dead, and the law had bound me out to a mean old

farmer^{e3} in the country thirty mile back from the river, and he treated me so bad I couldn't stand it no longer; he went away to be gone a couple of days, and so I took my chance and stole some of his daughter's old clothes, and cleared out, and I had been three nights coming the thirty miles; I traveled nights, and hid day-times and slept, and the bag of bread and meat I carried from home lasted me all the way and I had a plenty. I said I believed my uncle Abner Moore would take care of me, and so that was why I struck out for this town of Goshen^{e4}.

"Goshen, child? This ain't Goshen. This is St. Petersburg. Goshen's ten mile further up the river. Who told you this was Goshen?"

"Why, a man I met at day-break this morning, just as I was going to turn into the woods for my regular sleep. He told me when the roads forked I must take the right hand, and five mile would fetch me to Goshen."

"He was drunk I reckon. He told you just exactly wrong."

"Well, he did act like he was drunk, but it ain't no matter now. I got to be moving along. I'll fetch Goshen before daylight."

"Hold on a minute. I'll put you up a snack to eat. You might want it."

So she put me up a snackⁱ¹², and says:

"Say—when a cow's laying down, which end of her gets up first? Answer up prompt, now—don't stop to study over it. Which end gets up first?"

"The hind end, mum."

"Well, then, a horse?"

"The for'rard end, mum."

"Which side of a tree does the most moss grow on?"

"North side."

"If fifteen cows is browsing on a hillside, how many of them eats with their heads pointed the same direction?"

"The whole fifteen, mum."

"Well, I reckon you *have* lived in the country. I thought maybe you was trying to hocus me again. What's your real name, now?"

"George Peters, mum."

"Well, try to remember it, George. Don't forget and tell me it's Elexander before you go, and then get out by saying it's George-Elexander when I catch you. And don't go about women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe. Bless you, child, when you set out to thread a needle, don't hold the thread still and fetch the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread at it—that's the way a woman most always does; but a man always does 'tother way. And when you throw at a rat or anything, hitch yourself up a tip-toe, and fetch your hand up over your head as awkward as you can, and miss your rat about six or seven foot. Throw stiff-armed from the shoulder, like there was a pivot there for it to turn on—like a girl; not from the wrist and

elbow, with your arm out to one side, like a boy. And mind you, when a girl tries to catch anything in her lap, she throws her knees apart^{e5}; she don't clap them together, the way you did when you caught the lump of lead. Why, I spotted you for a boy when you was threading the needle; and I contrived the other things just to make certain. Now trot along to your uncle, Sarah Mary Williams George Elexander Peters, and if you get into trouble you send word to Mrs. Judith Loftus, which is me, and I'll do what I can to get you out of it. Keep the river road, all the way, and next time you tramp, take shoes and socks with you^{e6}. The river road's a rocky one, and your feet 'll be in a condition when you get to Goshen, I reckon."

I went up the bank about fifty yards, and then I doubled on my tracks and slipped back to where my canoe was, a good piece below the house. I jumped in and was off in a hurry. I went up stream far enough to make the head of the island, and then started across. I took off the sun-bonnet, for I didn't want no blinders on, then. When I was about the middle, I hear the clock begin to strike; so I stops and listens; the sound come faint over the water, but clear—eleven. When I struck the head of the island I never waited to blow, though I was most winded, but I shoved right into the timber where my old camp used to be, and started a good fire there on a high-and-dry spot.

Then I jumped in the canoe and dug out for our place a mile and a half below, as hard as I could go. I landed, and slopped through the timber and up the ridge and into the cavern. There Jim laid, sound asleep on the ground. I roused him out and says:

“Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain’t a minute to lose. They’re after us!”

Jim never asked no questions, he never said a word; but the way he worked for the next half an hour showed about how he was scared. By that time everything we had in the world was on our raft and she was ready to be shoved out from the willow cove where she was hid. We put out the camp fire at the cavern the first thing, and didn’t show a candle outside after that.

I took the canoe out from shore a little piece and took a look, but if there was a boat around I couldn’t see it, for stars and shadows ain’t good to see by. Then we got out the raft and slipped along down in the shade, past the foot of the island dead still, never saying a word.

Chapter 11

„Kom binne,” sê die vrou, en ek maak so.

„Sit,” sê sy.

Ek gaan sit.

Sy beskou my van kop tot toon met haar klein blink ogies en vra dan: „En wat’s jou naam as ek mag vra ?”

„Sarah Williams.”

„Waar woon jy? Hier in die buurt ?”

„Nee, tante. In Hookerville. Dis sewe myl stroomaf. Ek het die hele pad geloop en nou’s ek poot-uit.”

„Honger ook, sou ek reken. Ek sal vir jou iets gaan haal.”

„Nee, tante. Ek is nie honger nie. Ek was nou-nou al so honger dat ek twee myl trug eers by ’n plaas aangeloop het; nou’s ek nie meer honger nie. Dis hoekom ek so laat is. My ma is siek, en die geld is op en alles, en nou’t ek my oom, Abner Moore, kom soek. Hy woon aan die bokant van die dorp, het sy gesê. Ek was nog nooit vantevore hier nie. Ken tante hom miskien ?”

„Nee. Maar ek ken ook nog nie al die mense nie. Dis nog maar skaars twee weke dat ek hier woon. Dis ’n hele ent pad na die dorp se

bokant toe, hoor. Jy moet liever maar vannag hier oorbly. Haal af jou kappie.”

„Nee,” sê ek. „Ek sal net ’n rukkie rus en maar weer verder gaan. Ek’s nie bang vir die donker nie.”

Nee, sê sy, sy sal nie toelaat dat ek stokallenig daar uitgaan nie; maar haar man sal so oor ’n uur-en-’n-half tuiskom, dan kan hy saam met my stap. Toe begin sy praat van haar man, en van haar familie hoër op teen die rivier, en van haar familie laer af teen die rivier, en hoeveel beter hulle gewoon was, en hoe dit al vir hulle begin lyk het hulle het ’n fout gemaak om hier na ons dorp toe te trek in plaas van te bly waar hulle was, ensovoorts ensovoorts, tot ek naderhand begin dink *ek* het ’n fout gemaak om hier na haar toe te kom om te probeer uitvind wat daar in die dorp aangaan. Maar na ’n ruk slaan sy oor na Pa en die moord, en toe laat ek haar met graagte maar haar gang verder gaan. Sy vertel my alles van Tom Sawyer en van my, en hoe ons die sesduisend dollar gekry het (sý’t vertel dit was tien), en van Pa, en hoe ’n skorriemorrie hy is, en van hoe ’n skorrie- morrie *ék* is—en uiteindelik vertel sy toe ook hoe ek vermoor is.

„Wie’t dit gedoen?” vra ek. „Ons het daar onder in Hookerville heelwat van die affêre gehoor, maar niemand daar weet wie Huck Finn vermoor het nie.”

„Ek dink daar’s heelwat mense *hier* wat graag sal wil weet wie hom vermoor het! Party dink dis ou Finn self.”

„Nooit! Regtig?”

„Hier aan die begin het amper almal so gedink. Hy sal nooit weet hoe amper tjies hy aan die naaste boom opgehang is nie. Maar nog voor die eerste dag verby was, het hulle van mening verander en begin dink dis ’n ontsnapte negerslaaf, ene Jim, wat die moord gepleeg het.”

„Maar *hy* . . .” Ek bly dadelik weer stil. Dis beter om maar my mond te hou, dink ek. Gelukkig babbelsy maar een stryk deur en kom glad nie agter dat ek haar in die rede geval het nie.

„Die neger het dieselfde nag toe Huck Finn vermoor is, van sy mense af weggeloop. Nou’s daar ’n beloning uitgelooft vir die een wat hom aankeer—driehonderd dollar. En daar’s ’n prys op ou Finn se kop ook—tweehonderd dollar. Want jy sien, die oggend net na die moord was hy hier in die dorp om daarvan te vertel, en daarna is hy saam met die seekgeselskap op die pontboot uit, maar net daarna het hy spoorloos verdwyn. Die mense wou hom nog dieselfde dag somer gaan ophang, sien. Maar nou ja, toe ontdek hulle die vol- gende oggend die slaaf is weg, en hulle vind uit dat iemand hom tien- uur die aand—die nag toe die moord gepleeg is—buite gewaar het. En toe word die skuld op hóm gepak, sien, en terwyl almal nog besig is om daaroor te redekawel, hier kom ou Finn toe die volgende dag terug en hy loop soebat by regter Thatcher geld sodat hy die hele Illinois kan loop omkeer op soek na die negerslaaf. Die regter het hom ’n bietjie geld gegee en die aand drink hy hom toe dronk en rumoer tot ná middernag deur die strate saam met ’n paar baie

ver- dagte vreemdelinge, en daarna is hy vort saam met hulle. Nou ja, van toe af het hy nog nooit weer teruggekom nie, en hulle verwag ook nie om hom te sien voor die gedoente 'n bietjie oorgewaaï het nie, want nou meen die mense dis tóg hy wat sy seun vermoor het en die ding toe só geplooi het dat dit moes lyk asof dit deur 'n spul rowers gedoen is. Dan kan hy mos Huck se geld kry sonder om nog tyd te vermors met 'n hofspraak. Die mense sê hy was heeltemal kapabel en vang so iets aan. O, hy's so slim soos die houtjie van die galg, dis wat ék dink. As hy 'n jaar lank wegbly, is sy kop deur. Niemand kan enigiets teen hom bewys nie, sien; en teen daardie tyd sal alles al weer bedaar het, en hy sal Huck se geld sommer so handomkeer inpalm."

„Dit lyk vir my ook so, tante. Dit lyk nie of iets hom sal kan keer nie. Het almal nou opgehou om te dink dat die neger dit gedoen het?"

„O nee, nog lank nie almal nie. Daar's nog baie wat hom verdink. Maar hulle sal wel een van die mooi dae die neger aankeer en dan kan hulle dalk alles uit hom uit trek."

„Wat? Soek hulle hom dan nog al die tyd?"

„Goeiste, maar jy's tog 'n onnosele bloedjie! Dink jy daar lê maar aldag driehonderd dollar rond wat mens sommer so kan optel? Daar's heelwat mense wat dink die slaaf is glad nie ver hiervandaan nie—en ek is een van hulle, al hou ek my mond. Net 'n paar dae gelede nog praat ek met 'n ou egpaar wat hier langsaan in die hout- huisie woon, en hulle vertel my toe dat daar omtrent nooit 'n mens op die eiland daar onder—Jacksonseiland—kom nie. „Woon daar dan nie mense nie?" vra ek. Nee, sê hulle; niemand. Toe sê ek maar niks verder nie, maar ek begin by myselfers dink. Jy sien, ek het ál 'n idee ek het net 'n dag of twee tevore daar aan die bokant van die eiland rook sien optrek. En toe dink ek mos: dit lyk vir my altevol moontlik dat die slaaf dalk daar iewers wegkruip. En dis die moeite werd om 'n slag te gaan kyk en die plek behoortlik te fynkam. Ek het nog nie weer rook gesien ná daardie dag nie, so hy's dalk al vort—as dit ooit hy was; maar my man gaan nog oorroeï om te gaan kyk, hy en nog 'n man. Hy was weg rivier-op, maar hy't net vandag teruggekom; en toe hy twee uur gelede sy voet hier oor die drumpel sit, toe vertel ek hom van die ding."

Ek het so ongemaklik begin voel dat ek net nie meer kon stilsit nie. Ek moes iets kry om my hande besig te hou; toe tel ek maar sommer 'n naald van die tafel af op en begin 'n garing daar deurstee. Maar my hande was bewerig en ek het nie waffer goed gevaar nie. Die vrou het opgehou met praat. Ek het vinnig opgekyk en gesien sy sit my met 'n snaakse uitdrukking en so 'n eifense glimlaggie en dophou. Haastig plak ek die naald en gare weer op die tafel neer en hou my danig geïnteresseerd—ek wás ook.

„Driehonderd dollar is mos sommer 'n hoop geld," sê ek. „Ek wens my ma kon dit in die hande kry. Gaan tante se man vanaand nog oor eiland toe?"

„O ja. Hy's nou net dorp toe saam met die man van wie ek jou vertel het. Hulle het 'n boot gaan haal en probeer uitvind of hulle nie iewers nog 'n geweer te lene kan kry nie. Hulle gaan net na middernag oor."

„Sou hulle nie beter kon sien as hulle wag dat dit dag word nie?”

„Ja. Kan die slaaf nie óók dan beter sien nie ? Ná middernag sal hy waarskynlik aan die slaap wees en dan kan hulle des te makliker deur die bosse rondsnuifel en sy kampvuur soek—dis te sê as hy een het.”

„Ek het nie so daaraan gedink nie.”

Die hele tyd hou die vrou my nog so half snaakserig dop en ek voel glad nie op my gemak nie. Na ’n rukkie vra sy skielik: „Hoe’t jy nou weer gesê—wat is jou naam, kindjie?”

„M-Mary Williams.”

Ek het ál die gedagte gehad dat ek nie die eerste slag „Mary” gesê het nie; dus het ek dit nie gewaag om op te kyk nie; ek het gewonder of ek nie dalk „Sarah” gesê het nie, en ek het taamlik in ’n hoek ge- dryf gevoel—en ek was bang dat ek dalk so *lyk* ook. As die vrou maar net weer iets wou sê! Hoe langer sy stilbly, hoe ongemaakliker raak ek.

Maar eindelijk sê sy: „Skatjie, ek het gedink jy’t gesê jou naam is Sarah?”

„Ja, natuurlik, tante, ek heet Sarah Mary Williams. Sarah is my eerste naam. Party mense noem my Sarah, ander noem my Mary.” „Is dit hoe sake staan ?”

„Ja, tante.”

Ek het nou bietjie beter gevoel, maar nog steeds gewens dat ek liewer daar kon uitkom. Ek kon nog steeds nie opkyk na haar toe nie.

Maar toe begin die vrou vertel oor hoe hulle sukkel en oor hoe arm hulle is, en hoe die rotte die huis op horings neem asof die plek aan hulle behoort, ensovoorts ensovoorts, en stadigaan het ek meer op my gemak begin voel. Dit was die waarheid wat sy van die rotte vertel het: elke kort-kort het mens een van hulle se neus by ’n gaatjie in die hoek sien uitsteek. Sy’t my vertel dat sy altyd moes sorg dat daar gooidinge byderhand is wanneer sy alleen is, anders laat hulle haar net nie met rus nie. Sy’t my ’n stukkie lood gewys wat in ’n bolletjie gefrommel was: daarmee het sy gewoonlik gegooi, het sy vertel; en goed ook. Maar ongelukkig het sy ’n dag of wat gelede haar arm verrek en sy was dus nie so seker of sy nou nog so sekuur sou kon gooi nie. Maar sy’t tog gesit en wag dat ’n kans moet kom, en skielik haak sy af en gooi na ’n rot, maar ver mis.

„Eina!” roep sy. „Dit maak my arm darem te seer!”

Die volgende slag moet ék probeer, stel sy voor. Ek wou daar wegkom voor haar man terugkom, maar ek het haar natuurlik niks laat agterkom nie. Dus het ek maar die loodballetjie gaan optel en net toe ’n rot weer sy neus uitsteek, blaker ek hom. As hy net daar bly sit het, sou hy daar maar sleg van afgekom het. Sy’t gedink dit was ’n baie goeie skoot en sy was vas oortuig daarvan dat ek die volgende een sou raakgooi. Daarop loop tel sy weer die lood op en bring dit terug, saam met ’n stuk wol waarmee ek haar glo moes help. Ek het my hande uitgesteek sodat sy die wol daar kon omhang, en terwyl sy besig is, praat sy aaneen oor haar en haar man se sake.

Maar skielik hou sy ’n oomblikkie op en sê: „Hou jy maar die rotte dop.

Dis beter dat jy die stukkie lood reghou op jou skoot.” En met dié woorde laat sy die loodballetjie in my skoot val. Ek klap dadelik my bene toe om dit te vang, en toe begin sy maar weer praat. Maar net ’n kort rukkie. Toe haal sy die wol van my hande af en kyk my vol in die gesig—doodvriendelik—en sê: „Nou toe nou: wat is jou regte naam?”

„W-wat, tante?”

„Wat is jou regte naam ? Is dit Bill, of Tom, of Bob ? Of wat ?”

Ek skat ek het soos ’n blaar daar gesit en bewoos en net nie geweet wát om te doen nie. Maar ek antwoord: „Tante moet asseblief nie gekskeer met ’n arme meisiekind soos ek nie. As ek hier in die pad is, sal ek . . .”

„Nee, jy sal nie. Sit daar en bly net waar jy is. Ek gaan jou nie seer- maak nie en ek sal ook niks verklap nie. Maar jy moet my vertrou en my jou geheim vertel. Ek sal dit bewaar. Wat meer is, ek sal jou help. My ou man ook, as jy wil. Kyk, ek weet jy’s ’n leerjonge wat wegge- loop het, dis al. Dis niks nie. man. Jy’t mos nie kwaad gedoen nie. Hulle’t jou sleg behandel en toe het jy besluit om weg te loop. Toe maar, my arme kind, ek sal niks uitlap nie. Kom nou, vertel nou vir my soos ’n soet seun.”

Toe sê ek maar dit sal nie help om langer te probeer wegsteek nie: ek sal maar openhartig wees en haar alles vertel, solank sy net nie haar belofte breek nie. En ek vertel haar dat my pa en ma dood is en dat die wet my gedwing het om te gaan werk by ’n nare ou boer wat dertig myl van die rivier af op die platteland gewoon het; en hy het my só sleg behandel dat ek dit nie langer kon verduur nie. Toe hy dus vir ’n paar dae moes weggaan, het ek my kans waargeneem, ’n klompie van sy dogter se ou klere vasgelê en gemaak dat ek wegkom. Die dertig myl het my nou net mooi drie nagte geneem: ek loop net snags verder, want bedags kruip ek weg en slaap. Ek het ’n sak vol brood en vleis met my saamgebring en het dus oorgenoeg te ete gehad. En nou’t ek maar gehoop my oom, Abner Moore, sou vir my sorg. Dis dié dat ek die pad hier na die dorpie Goshen toe geneem het.

„Goshen, my kind? Maar dis nie Goshen dié nie! Dis St. Petersburg. Goshen lê nog tien myl verder teen die rivier op. Wie’t vir jou vertel dis Goshen dié?”

„’n Man wat ek teen dagbreek vanmóre ontmoet het net toe ek op pad was bos toe vir my gewone slapie. Hy’t vir my gesê ek moet regs draai by die kruispad, en dan sou ek vyf myl verder by Goshen aan- kom.”

„Hy moes dronk gewees het. Hy’t jou net mooi verkeerd-om beduie.”

„Dit het gelyk of hy dronkerig is, maar dit maak nie nou saak nie. Ek moet net nou aanstalte maak, dan haal ek Goshen nog voor dagbreek.”

„Wag so ’n bietjie. Ek maak vir jou ’n bietjie padkos. Dalk kry jy dit nodig.”

Sy maak dus gou eers ’n stukkie padkos reg. Toe vra sy: „As ’n koei lê en slaap—watter kant staan die eerste op? Antwoord nou vinnig, moenie eers staan en nadink nie. Watter kant staan die eerste op?”

„Die agterkant, tante.”

„En ’n perd?”

Die voorkant, tante.”

„Aan watter kant van ’n boom groei die mos ?”

„Noordekant.”

„As daar vyftien koeie teen ’n skuinste staan en wei, hoeveel van hulle kyk in dieselfde rigting?”

„Al vyftien, tante.”

„Hm, ja. Dit lyk my tog jy ken plaaslewe. Ek het net gedog jy probeer my weer flous. En wat is jou regte naam nou?”

„George Peters, tante.”

„Nou goed. Probeer dit nou onthou, George. Moenie weer gaan staan en vergeet en vir my sê dis Elexander voor jy loop en dan probeer wegkom deur te sê dis George Elexander as ek jou betrap nie. En bly weg van vroumense met daardie ou katoenrok. Jy maak maar ’n swak meisiekind uit—maar dalk sal jy mansmense om die bos lei. En luister, my kind: as jy garing deur ’n naald probeer ryg, moenie die garing stilhou en die naald se oog nader bring nie. Hou die naald stil en steek dan die garing deur—dis hoe vroumense gewoonlik maak. ’n Man gaan andersom te werk. En as jy na ’n rot of ’n ding gooi, staan dan eers op jou tone, lig jou hand so lomp as jy kan bokant jou kop en sorg dat jy ’n ses, sewe voet mis gooi. Gooi met ’n stywe arm, van die skouer af, asof daar ’n skarnier is wat al in die rondte draai. Dis hoe meisiekinders maak. Nie met die pols en die elmboog, met jou arm uitgesteek soos ’n seun nie. En oppas: as ’n meisiekind iets in haar skoot probeer vang, gooi sy haar knieë oop: sy kap hulle nie teenmekaar soos jy gemaak het toe jy daardie stukkie lood gevang het nie. Jy sien, ek het ontdek dat jy ’n seunskind is toe jy daardie garing deur die naald probeer steek het—die ander goed het ek sommer geprakseer net om seker te maak. Nou toe, Sarah Mary Williams George Elexander Peters, maak dat jy nou wegkom na jou oom toe. En as jy dalk in die sop beland, stuur net ’n boodskap na mevrou Judith Loftus—dis ék —en ek sal sien wat ek kan doen om jou daar uit te kry. Hou nou al met die rivierpad langs; en as jy weer ’n slag wegloop, bring vir jou skoene en kouse saam. Die rivierpad is klipperig en ek dink jou voete gaan les opsê nog voor jy by Goshen aankom.”

Ek loop sowat vyftig tree teen die wal op, kom dan al op my spore weer terug en sluip terug na waar die kano ’n hele ent onderkant die huisie lê en wag. Haastig spring ek in en maak dat ek wegkom. Eers roei ek ver genoeg stroom-op om omtrent gelyk met die eiland se bopunt te kom, dan begin ek oorsteek. Toe ek naasteby halfpad is, hoor ek hoe die horlosie begin slaan en ek hou eers stil om te luister. Dofweg maar baie duidelik kom die geluid oor die water aan—elf slae.

Toe ek by die eiland se bokant aanland, rus ek nie eers ’n oomblik om eers asem te skep nie, al is ek amper wind-uit; ek kry dadelik tussen die bosse in koers na waar my ou kampplek eers was, en ek soek ’n hoë, droë plekkie uit om ’n groot vuur te maak. Toe spring ek weer terug in die kano en roei so

vinnig as wat ek kan na ons skuilplek, sowat een-en-'n-half myl laer af. Daar meer ek vas en ploeter deur die modderige boskasie tot by ons grot bo teen die rif. En dan kry ek Jim vas aan die slaap op die grond.

Ek maak horn dadelik wakker. „Opstaan en regmaak, Jim,” sê ek. „Ons het g'n oomblik om te mors nie. Hulle's op ons spoor!”

Jim vra nie 'n enkele vraag nie en hy sê geen dooie woord nie, maar aan die manier waarop hy daardie volgende halfuur werskaf, kan mens sien hoe bang hy is. Teen daardie tyd was al ons aardse besittings op ons vlot en alles was agtermekaar om weg te roei daar van die wilgerbos af waar ons hom gebêre het. Dus het ons heel eerste die kampvuur daar bo by die grot geblus en gesorg dat ons g'n kers- liggie buitekant vertoon nie.

Eers het ek 'n endjie van die wal af uitgeroei op die kano om die wêreld te bespied, maar as daar 'n bootjie in die buurt was, dan was dit onsigbaar. In sterlig en skaduwee sien mens ook nie juis goed nie. Toe't ons die vlot uitgestoot en al in die skadu langs afgedryf tot onderkant die punt van die eiland, morsdoodstil, sonder om 'n woord te sê.

SECTION 12

It must a been close onto one o'clock when we got below the island at last, and the raft did seem to go mighty slow. If a boat was to come along, we was going to take to the canoe and break for the Illinois shore; and it was well a boat didn't come, for we hadn't ever thought to put the gun into the canoe, or a fishing-line or anything to eat. We was in ruther too much of a sweat to think of so many things. It warn't good judgment to put *everything* on the raft.

If the men went to the island, I just expect they found the camp fire I built, and watched it all night for Jim to come. Anyways, they stayed away from us, and if my building the fire never fooled them it warn't no fault of mine. I played it as low-down on them as I could.

When the first streak of day begun to show, we tied up to a tow-head in a big bend on the Illinois side, and hacked off cotton-wood branches with the hatchet and covered up the raft with them so she looked like there had been a cave-in in the bank there. A tow-head is a sand-bar that has cotton-woods on it as thick as harrow-teeth.

We had mountains on the Missouri shore and heavy timber on the Illinois side, and the channel was down the Missouri shore at that place, so we warn't afraid of anybody running across us. We laid there all day and watched the rafts and steamboats^{e1} spin down the Missouri shore, and up-bound steamboats fight the big river in the middle. I told Jim all about the time I had

jabbering with that woman; and Jim said she was a smart one, and if she was to start after us herself *she* wouldn't set down and watch a camp fire—no, sir, she'd fetch a dog. Well, then, I said, why couldn't she tell her husband to fetch a dog? Jim said he bet she did think of it by the time the men was ready to start, and he believed they must a gone up town to get a dog and so they lost all that time, or else we wouldn't be here on a tow-head sixteen or seventeen mile below the village—no, indeedy, we would be in that same old town again. So I said I didn't care what was the reason they didn't get us, as long as they didn't.

When it was beginning to come on dark, we poked our heads out of the cottonwood thicket and looked up, and down, and across; nothing in sight; so Jim took up some of the top planks of the raft and built a snug wigwam to get under in blazing weather and rainy, and to keep the things dry. Jim made a floor for the wigwam, and raised it a foot or more above the level of the raft, so now the blankets and all the traps was out of the reach of steamboat waves. Right in the middle of the wigwam we made a layer of dirt about five or six inches deep with a frame around it for to hold it to its place; this was to build a fire on in sloppy weather or chilly; the wigwam would keep it from being seen. We made an extra steering oar, too, because one of the others might get broke, on a snag or something. We fixed up a short forked stick to hang the old lantern on; because we must always light the lantern whenever we see a steamboat coming down stream, to keep from getting run over; but we wouldn't have to light it for up-stream boats unless we see we was in what they call a "crossing;"^{e2} for the river was pretty high

yet, very low banks being still a little under water; so up-bound boats didn't always run the channel, but hunted easy water.

This second night we run between seven and eight hours, with a current that was making over four mile an hour. We caught fish, and talked, and we took a swim now and then to keep off sleepiness. It was kind of solemn, drifting down the big still river, laying on our backs looking up at the stars, and we didn't ever feel like talking loud, and it warn't often that we laughed, only a little kind of a low chuckle. We had mighty good weather, as a general thing, and nothing ever happened to us at all, that night, nor the next, nor the next.

Every night we passed towns, some of them away up on black hillsides, nothing but just a shiny bed of lights, not a house could you see. The fifth night we passed St. Louis, and it was like the whole world lit up. In St. Petersburg they used to say there was twenty or thirty thousand people in St. Louis, but I never believed it till I see that wonderful spread of lights at two o'clock that still night. There warn't a sound there; everybody was asleep.

Every night, now, I used to slip ashore, towards ten o'clock, at some little village, and buy ten or fifteen cents' worth of meal or bacon or other stuff to eat; and sometimes I lifted a chicken that warn't roosting comfortable, and took him along. Pap always said, take a chicken when you get a chance, because if you don't want him yourself you can easy find somebody that does, and a good deed ain't ever forgot. I never see pap when he didn't want the chicken himself, but

that is what he used to say, anyway.

Mornings, before daylight, I slipped into corn fields and borrowed a watermelon, or a mushmelon, or a punkin, or some new corn, or things of that kind. Pap always said it warn't no harm to borrow things, if you was meaning to pay them back, sometime; but the widow said it warn't anything but a soft name for stealing, and no decent body would do it. Jim said he reckoned the widow was partly right and pap was partly right; so the best way would be for us to pick out two or three things from the list and say we wouldn't borrow them any more—then he reckoned it wouldn't be no harm to borrow the others. So we talked it over all one night, drifting along down the river, trying to make up our minds whether to drop the watermelons, or the cantelopes, or the mushmelons, or what. But towards daylight we got it all settled satisfactory, and concluded to drop crabapples and p'simmons. We warn't feeling just right, before that, but it was all comfortable now. I was glad the way it come out, too, because crabapples ain't ever good, and the p'simmons wouldn't be ripe for two or three months yet^{e3}.

We shot a water-fowl, now and then, that got up too early in the morning or didn't go to bed early enough in the evening. Take it all around, we lived pretty high.

The fifth night below St. Louis we had a big storm after midnight, with a power of thunder and lightning, and the rain poured down in a solid sheet. We stayed in the wigwam and let the raft take care of itself. When the lightning glared out we could see a big straight river ahead, and high rocky bluffs on both sides. By-and-by says I, "Hel-*lo*, Jim, looky yonder!" It was a steamboat

that had killed herself on a rock^{e4}. We was drifting straight down for her. The lightning showed her very distinct. She was leaning over, with part of her upper deck above water, and you could see every little chimbly-guy^{e5} clean and clear, and a chair by the big bell, with an old slouch hat hanging on the back of it when the flashes come.

Well, it being away in the night^{e6}, and stormy, and all so mysterious-like, I felt just the way any other boy would a felt when I see that wreck laying there so mournful and lonesome in the middle of the river. I wanted to get aboard of her and slink around a little, and see what there was there. So I says:

“Le’s land on her, Jim.”

But Jim was dead against it, at first. He says:

“I doan’ want to go fool’n ’long er no wrack. We’s doin’ blame’ well, en we better let blame’ well alone, as de good book says. Like as not dey’s a watchman on dat wrack.”

“Watchman your grandmother,” I says; “there ain’t nothing to watch but the texas^{e7} and the pilot-house; and do you reckon anybody’s going to resk his life for a texas and a pilot-house such a night as this, when it’s likely to break up and wash off down the river any minute?” Jim couldn’t say nothing to that, so he didn’t try. “And besides,” I says, “we might borrow something worth having, out of the captain’s stateroom. Seegars, I bet you—and cost five cents apiece, solid cash. Steamboat captains is always rich, and get sixty dollars a month, and *they* don’t care a cent what a thing costs, you know, long as they want it. Stick a

candle in your pocket; I can't rest, Jim, till we give her a rummaging. Do you reckon Tom Sawyer would ever go by this thing? Not for pie, he wouldn't. He'd call it an adventure—that's what he'd call it; and he'd land on that wreck if it was his last act. And wouldn't he throw style into it?—wouldn't he spread himself, nor nothing? Why, you'd think it was Christopher C'lumbus discovering Kingdom-Come. I wish Tom Sawyer was here."

Jim he grumbled a little, but give in. He said we mustn't talk any more than we could help, and then talk mighty low. The lightning showed us the wreck again, just in time, and we fetched the starboard derrick, and made fast there.

The deck was high out, here. We went sneaking down the slope of it to labboard^{e8}, in the dark, towards the texas, feeling our way slow with our feet, and spreading our hands out to fend off the guys, for it was so dark we couldn't see no sign of them. Pretty soon we struck the forward end of the sky-light, and clumb onto it; and the next step fetched us in front of the captain's door, which was open, and by Jimminy, away down through the texas-hall we see a light! and all in the same second we seem to hear low voices in yonder!

Jim whispered and said he was feeling powerful sick, and told me to come along. I says, all right; and was going to start for the raft; but just then I heard a voice wail out and say:

"Oh, please don't, boys; I swear I won't ever tell!"

Another voice said, pretty loud:

“It’s a lie, Jim Turner. You’ve acted this way before. You always want more’n your share of the truck, and you’ve always got it, too, because you’ve swore ’t if you didn’t you’d tell. But this time you’ve said it jest one time too many. You’re the meanest, treacherousest hound in this country.”

By this time Jim was gone for the raft. I was just a-biling with curiosity; and I says to myself, Tom Sawyer wouldn’t back out now, and so I won’t either; I’m agoing to see what’s going on here. So I dropped on my hands and knees, in the little passage, and crept aft in the dark, till there warn’t but about one stateroom betwixt me and the cross-hall of the texas. Then, in there I see a man stretched on the floor and tied hand and foot, and two men standing over him, and one of them had a dim lantern in his hand, and the other one had a pistol. This one kept pointing the pistol at the man’s head on the floor and saying—

“I’d *like* to! And I orter, too, a mean skunk!”

The man on the floor would shrivel up, and say: “Oh, please don’t. Bill—I hain’t ever goin’ to tell.”

And every time he said that, the man with the lantern would laugh, and say:

“Deed you *ain’t*! You never said no truer thing ’n that, you bet you.” And once he said: “Hear him beg! and yit if we hadn’t got the best of him and tied him, he’d a killed us both. And what *for*? Jist for noth’n. Jist because we stood on our *rights*—that’s what for. But I lay you ain’t agoin’ to threaten nobody any more, Jim Turner. Put *up* that pistol, Bill.”

Bill says:

“I don’t want to, Jake Packard. I’m for killin’ him—and didn’t he kill old Hatfield jist the same way—and don’t he deserve it?”

“But I don’t *want* him killed, and I’ve got my reasons for it.”

“Bless yo’ heart for them words, Jake Packard! I’ll never forgit you, long’s I live!” says the man on the floor, sort of blubbering.

Packard didn’t take no notice of that, but hung up his lantern on a nail, and started towards where I was, there in the dark, and motioned Bill to come. I crawfished as fast as I could, about two yards, but the boat slanted so that I couldn’t make very good time; so to keep from getting run over and caught I crawled into a stateroom on the upper side. The man come a-pawing along in the dark, and when Packard got to my stateroom, he says:

“Here—come in here.”

And in he come, and Bill after him. But before they got in, I was up in the upper berth, cornered, and sorry I come. Then they stood there, with their hands on the ledge of the berth, and talked. I couldn’t see them, but I could tell where they was, by the whisky they’d been having. I was glad I didn’t drink whisky; but it wouldn’t made much difference, anyway, because most of the time they couldn’t a treed me because I didn’t breathe. I was too scared. And besides, a body *couldn’t* breathe, and hear such talk. They talked low and earnest. Bill wanted to kill Turner. He says:

“He’s said he’ll tell, and he will. If we was to give both our shares to him *now*, it wouldn’t make no difference after the row, and the way we’ve served him. Shore’s you’re born, he’ll turn State’s evidence; now you hear *me*. I’m for putting him out of his troubles.”

“So’m I,” says Packard, very quiet.

“Blame it, I’d sorter begun to think you wasn’t. Well, then, that’s all right. Les’ go and do it.”

“Hold on a minute; I hain’t had my say yit. You listen to me. Shooting’s good, but there’s quieter ways if the thing’s *got* to be done. But what *I* say, is this; it ain’t good sense to go court’n around after a halter, if you can git at what you’re up to in some way that’s jist as good and at the same time don’t bring you into no resks. Ain’t that so?”

“You bet it is. But how you goin’ to manage it this time?”

“Well, my idea is this: we’ll rustle around and gether up whatever pickins we’ve overlooked in the staterooms, and shove for shore and hide the truck. Then we’ll wait. Now I say it ain’t agoin’ to be more ’n two hours befo’ this wrack breaks up and washes off down the river. See? He’ll be drowneded, and won’t have nobody to blame for it but his own self. I reckon that’s a considerble sight better’n killin’ of him. I’m unfavorable to killin’ a man as long as you can git around it; it ain’t good sense, it ain’t good morals. Ain’t I right?”

“Yes—I reck’n you are. But s’pose she *don’t* break up and wash off?”

“Well, we can wait the two hours, anyway, and see, can’t we?”

“All right, then; come along.”

So they started, and I lit out, all in a cold sweat, and scrambled forward. It was dark as pitch there; but I said in a kind of a coarse whisper, “Jim!” and he answered up, right at my elbow, with a sort of a moan, and I says:

“Quick, Jim, it ain’t no time for fooling around and moaning; there’s a gang of murderers in yonder, and if we don’t hunt up their boat and set her drifting down the river so these fellows can’t get away from the wreck, there’s one of ’em going to be in a bad fix. But if we find their boat we can put *all* of ’em in a bad fix—for the Sheriff ’ll get ’em. Quick—hurry! I’ll hunt the labboard side, you hunt the stabboard. You start at the raft, and——”

“Oh, my lordy, lordy! *Raf*? Dey ain’ no raf’ no mo’, she done broke loose en gone!—’en here we is!”

Chapter 12

Dit moes al naby eenuur gewees het toe ons einde ten laaste aan die onderkant van die eiland kom en dit het gelyk of die vlot so stadig soos ’n trapsoetjies beweeg. Ons het ons voorge- neem om in die kano oor te klouter en na Illinois se oewer toe te roei as daar dalk ’n bootjie opdaag, maar dis netsowel dat daar g’n boot sy verskyning gemaak het nie, want ons het skoon verged om die geweer, of ’n vislyn, of iets te ete in die kano te pak. Ons was te halsoorkop om aan soveel dinge tegelyk te dink; en dit was beslis nie baie wys om *alles* op die vlot te laai nie.

As die twee mans wel eiland toe gegaan het, dan het hulle seker die kampvuur gekry wat ek aangesteek het, en toe heelnag daar gesit en waghou

dat Jim moet terugkom. Want hulle het ons met rus gelaat; en dit sou nie my skuld wees as my vuur hulle nie om die bos gelei het nie. Dit was die laagste streek waaraan ek kon dink.

Met die eerste skynsel van die daglig het ons gaan vasmeer teen 'n slonsbank in 'n groot bog aan Illinois se kant, en katoenbosse se takke met die byl afgekap en die vlot daarmee toegestawel sodat dit moes lyk asof die wal daar half ingesak het. 'n Slonsbank is 'n sandbank vol katoenbosse wat so dig soos 'n eg se tande groei.

Aan die Missouri-kant het daar berge gelê, en aan die Illinois-kant digte woude; buitendien het die vaarkanaal op daardie plek oorkant langs die Missouri-wal geloop, sodat daar g'n kans was dat iemand op ons kon afkom nie. Die hele dag lank het ons daar bly lê en kyk hoe dat vlotte en stoomskepe al teen die Missouri-wal afdobber en hoe die stoomskepe stroom-op al in die middel van die groot rivier langs worstel. Ek het Jim lê en vertel van die ruk wat ek daar met die vrou aan die gesels was; en Jim het gedink sy's deksels uitgeslape. As sy self ons spoor gevat het, so't hy gesê, dan sou sy nie heelnaag lank bly sit het om 'n kampvuur dop te hou nie, o nee: sy sou 'n hond loop haal het. Maar wie sê sy't nie vir haar man gesê om 'n hond saam te neem nie? wou ek weet. Jim was doodseker daarvan dat sy wel daar- aan gedink het, net toe die twee mans reg was om te vertrek; en toe sou hulle eers moes teruggaan dorp toe om 'n hond te kry. Dis die dat hulle soveel tyd vermors het, anders sou ons nie nou daar op 'n slonsbank sestien, sewentien myl onderkant die dorp gesit en ginne- gaap het nie. O nee, dan was ons nou al lankal in daardie einste dorp terug. Dit traak my nie om watter rede hulle ons nog nie gevang het nie, het ek geantwoord: al wat saak maak, is dat dit nie *gebeur* het nie.

Toe dit begin skemer word, het ons deur die katoenbosse uitgeloer buitentoe—eers stroom-op, toe stroom-af, toe oor die rivier, maar daar was niks te sien nie. Dus het Jim opgestaan en 'n paar van die vlot se boonste planke uitgehaal om 'n tentjie daar bo-op te bou om die kwaai son en reën uit te hou en die goed droog te hou. Hy't ook 'n vloer vir die tentjie gemaak, 'n goeie voet bokant die vlot se hoog- ste balk, sodat al die komberse en goed buite bereik van die branders kon wees wat deur die stoombote opgeja word. Mooi in die middel van die tent het ons 'n lagie grond gegooi, so 'n vyf of ses duim diep, met 'n raamwerk rondom om dit vas te hou. Daarop kon mens dan in koue weer of op reëndae vuurmaak—die tent sou keer dat dit gesien word. Ons het nog 'n ekstra stuurspaan ook gemaak, ingeval een van die ander dalk breek of iewers vasgevang raak. Ons het 'n mik- stok staangemaak om die lantern aan te hang, want ons moes sorg dat daar altyd 'n lantern brand as ons 'n stoomboot stroom-af sien aankom, anders word ons dalk omgery. Vir bote wat stroom-op ry, was dit nie nodig nie—tensy ons dalk in 'n „kruising” beland soos dit genoem word—want die rivier was nog taamlik vol en laerige sandbanke het nog goed onder water gelê; bote wat stroom-op vaar, hoef dus nie al in die vaarkanaal langs te bou nie, maar kan makliker waters

uitsoek.

Dié tweede nag het ons so 'n sewe of agt uur lank bly vaar op 'n stroom wat meer as vier myl per uur gevloei het. Ons het visgevang, en gesels, en af en toe 'n slag geswem om die vaak weg te hou.'Daar was iets plegtigs daarin om so op die groot, stil rivier te drywe terwyl ons op ons rue lê en opkyk na die sterre; en ons het nooit lus gekry om hard te praat nie; en ons het maar min gelag ook, gewoonlik net so 'n eflense keellaggie. Oor die algemeen was die weer regtig lekker en daar't niks met ons gebeur nie—nie daardie nag nie, en ook nie die volgende nie, en ook nie die een daarná nie.

Elke nag het ons by dorpe verbygekom, party van hulle doer-ver teen 'n swart hoogte, nes 'n glinsterende beddinkie liggies; van huise en goed kon mens niks uitmaak nie. Die vyfde nag is ons verby St. Louis en dit was kompleet asof die hele wêreld in ligte laaie staan. In St. Petersburg het hulle altyd vertel daar woon twintig- of dertig- duisend mense in St. Louis, maar ek het dit nooit geglo nie. Tot ek twee-uur daardie stil nag dié uitspansel van ligte gewaar het. Daar was g'n enkele geluid nie; almal was vas aan die slaap.

Ek het begin om elke nag aan wal te gaan, gewoonlik so teen tien- uur, wanneer ons by die een of ander klein dorpie verbykom. Dan het ek tien of vyftien sent se meel en spek en ander eetgoed gekoop; en af en toe 'n hoender vasgelê wat nie alte rustig geslaap het nie, en hom ook saamgedra. Pa't mos aljimmers gesê: gaps altyd 'n hoender as jy die kans kry, want al wil jy hom dalk nie self hê nie, sal jy maklik iemand anders kry wat hom wêl wil hê—en 'n goeie daad word nooit vergeet nie. Ek was nog nooit by dat Pa nié self die hoender wou hê nie, maar dis in ieder geval wat hy gesê het.

Smórens, voor dagbreek, het ek in 'n koringland ingeglip en 'n waatlemoen of 'n spanspek of 'n pampoen of'n paar groenmielies of goed geleen. Pa het altyd gesê daar's g'n sonde in om dinge te leer nie, as jy net van plan is om dit weer vroeër of later terug te betaal; maar die weduwee het gesê dis sommer net 'n mooi woord vir steel en g'n ordentlike mens sal sulke dinge doen nie. Jim het gesê hy reken die weduwee is half reg, en Pa óók; dit sou dus die heel beste wees as ons 'n paar dinge op die lysie uitsoek en besluit dat ons nie weer die goed sal leen nie; dan kan daar g'n sonde in steek om die ánder te leen nie. Ons het een hele nag lank daaroor gepraat, terwyl ons al met die rivier langs afdrywe; want ons kon nie besluit of ons die waatle- moene of die spanspekke of wát moes uitios nie. Maar so teen dag- breek het ons die saak mooi opgelos en besluit dat ons sou afsien van houtappels en tamatiepruime. Voorheen het ons nooit heeltemal gelukkig oor die saak gevoel nie, maar nou was alles in die haak. Ek was bly dat ons juis só besluit het, want ek pes houtappels en die tamatiepruime sou eers oor 'n twee, drie maande begin ryp word.

Af en toe het ons 'n wilde-eend geskiet—gewoonlik een wat die more te vroeg opgestaan of die vorige aand te laat gaan slaap het. En so, alles in ag genome, het ons sommer lekker gelewe.

Die vyfde nag ná ons by St. Louis verby is, het daar 'n kwaai storm 'n ruk

ná middernag losgebars, die ene donder en weerlig, met reent wat soos 'n dik muur uit die lug uit val. Ons het in die tent bly sit en die vlot maar aan sy eie genade oorgelaat. Toe die weerlig weer 'n slag helder oor ons uitslaan, sien ons 'n groot, pylreguit rivier voor ons uitstrek, met hoë rotswalle weerskant.

„Hemel, Jim!” roep ek skielik. „Kyk dáár!”

'n Stoomboot het daar op die rotse beland en ons was besig om reg daarop af te stuur. In die weerlig kon ons die boot so duidelik soos helderoordag sien. Hy't ver oorgeleun, met 'n stuk van die bodek bokant die water uitgelig, en mens kon elke skoorsteenkappie sien, en 'n stoel wat daar langs die skeepsklok gestaan het, en 'n ou son- hoed wat oor die leuning hang.

Daar so diep in die nag, met die storm, en alles so geheimsinnig en vreemd, het ek toe gevoel nes enige ander seun sou voel as hy 'n wrak so treurig en verlate in die middel van die rivier sien lê. Ek wou op die ding kom en bietjie rondsnuffel en sien wat daar alles was.

„Kom ons gaan aan boord, Jim,” stel ek dus voor.

Maar Jim wil van niks weet nie. „Ek loop foeter op g'n wrak nie,” antwoord hy. „Ons drywe nou lekker vinnig en ek wil g'n lollery met dié ding hê nie. Dis sos die Boek sê. Hoe weet jy daar's nie 'n wag of 'n ding op die dek nie?”

„Wag se voet!” antwoord ek. „Al waaroor mens daar kan wag- hou, is die stuurkajuit, en dink jy miskien enigiemand gaan op 'n nag soos die sy lewe waag om 'n ou stuurkajuit op te pas as die ding enige oomblik uitmekaar kan breek en kan afspoel?” Daarop kon Jim g'n antwoord gee nie, en hy't ook maar nie probeer nie. „Buitendien,” sê ek, „dalk kry ons daar iets te lene, iets wat die moeite werd is. In die kaptein se kajuit kan daar maklik goed soos sigare wees—en hulle is vyf sent stuk werd, in harde kontant. Die kaptein van 'n stoomboot is altyd skatryk. Hy kry sestig dollar 'n maand en dit skeel *hom* niks hoeveel 'n ding kos nie. As hy iets wil hê, dan koop hy dit. Steek 'n kers in jou sak. Ek kan nie meer wag nie, Jim; ek wil eers daar gaan snuffel. Dink jy miskien Tom Sawyer sou ooit by so iets verbygery het? Nog so nooit as te nimmer nie! Hy sou sê dis 'n avontuur, dis wat hy sou sê. En hy sou daar loop opklim, al het hy geweet dis die laaste ding wat hy in sy lewe gaan doen. En hoe sou hy nie te werk gegaan het nie! Hy sou hom gate uit geniet het. Gits, dit sou lyk soos Christopher Columbus wat die hemel self ontdek! Ek wens Tom Sawyer was vannag hier!”

Jim het nog 'n bietjie gebrom-brom, maar toe ingegee. Hy wou net nie hê ons moes meer praat as wat nodig was nie—en so sag as moontlik. Net op die regte oomblik het die weerlig weer 'n slag oor die wrak gespeel, en ons het aan die stuurboordlaaiboom gaan vas- meer.

Die dek het daar hoog bo die water uitgestaan. Ons het al teen die skuinste langs afgesluip na die bakboordkant, alles in die stikdonker, en begin koers kry na die offisiërsdek. Voetjie vir voetjie het ons ons weg gebaan, met ons hande voel-voel uitgesteek om die ankertoue mis te loop—want *sien* kon mens nie. Na 'n rukkie kom ons by die voerpunt van die ligluik en ons klouter

daarop, en 'n enkele treetjie verder beland ons voor die kaptein se kajuit wat wawydoop staan. En toe gewaar ons skielik 'n lig, doer anderkant die offisiersdek se saal. En op dieselfde oomblik hoor ons stemme ook daarvandaan kom.

Jim begin fluister hier langs my en sê hy voel siek, en hy wil hê ek moet saam terugkom. Goed, sê ek; en ek is net van plan om terug te draai vlot se kant toe, toe ek 'n stem hoor kerm:

„Seblief tog, kêrels, moenie! Ek sweer julle ek sal nooit verklap nie!”

En 'n ander stem antwoord taamlik hard: „Jy lieg, Jim Turner. Jy't al een keer tevore só gemaak. Jy wil altyd méér hê as jou deel van die goed, en jy't dit nog altyd gekry ook omdat jy gesweer het jy sal niks uitlap nie. Maar nou't jy dit net mooi één keer te veel gesê. Jy's die laagste, verfoeilikste skurk in die hele land!”

Teen dié tyd was Jim al vort vlot toe. Maar in my binneste het dit gebrand van nuuskierigheid. Tom Sawyer sou nooit weggehol het nie, besluit ek by myself; daarom sal ék ook nie. Ek gaan eers sien wat hier aan die gang is. Ek sak dus dadelik op my hande en knieë neer en kruip handeviervoet deur die donker totdat daar nog net een groot kajuit tussen my en die offisiersafdeling se dwarssaal is. En daarbinne gewaar ek toe 'n man op die vloer lê, met sy hande en voete vasgebind, en twee ander wat oor hom buk, die een met 'n dowwe lantern in sy hand, die ander met 'n rewolwer. Die tweede ou hou die rewolwer al op die vasgebinde man se kop gerig, en hy sê net oor en oor:

„Ek is *lus* en doen dit! En ek behóórt ook, jou lae hond!”

Dan krul die man op die vloer elke slag in 'n houpie op en sê: „O asseblieftog, Bill, ek belowe jou ek sal nóóit iets loop uitlap nie!” En slag vir slag as hy so sê, dan lag die kêrel met die lantern en sê: „Dis reg: jy sal nie. Jy't nog nooit so 'n waar ding in jou lewe gesê nie, dit wed ek jou.” En een keer sê hy: „Hoor hoe soebat hy! En tog, as ons hom nie oorrompel het en hom vasgebind het nie, dan't hy ons altwee doodgemaak. En hoekom? Sommer-so, vir niks. Net omdat ons op ons regte gestaan het, dis hoekom. Maar ek wed jou jý gaan nooit weer iemand dreig nie, Jim Turner. Sit *weg* daardie rewolwer, Bill!”

„Nee, ek is nie *lus* nie, Jake Packard,” antwoord Bill. „Ek het *lus* om hom dood te maak. Dis mos hoe hy ou Hatfield doodgemaak het, net so. Dink jy nie hy verdien dit nie?”

„Maar ek wil hom nie dood *hê* nie. En ek het my eie redes daar- voor.”

„Die hemel seen jou vir dié woorde, Jake Packard,” stotter die man op die vloer. „Ek sal dit onthou tot die dag van my dood.” Packard steur hom nie daaraan nie, maar hang sy lantern aan 'n spyker en begin aankom na waar ek in die donker weggkruip. Hy beduie vir Bill om saam te kom. Ek begin soos 'n krap agteruit skuife, maar die boot lê so skuins dat ek nie juis vinnig vorder nie. En om te keer dat ek platgetrap word, kruip ek toe maar in 'n kajuit aan die bokant in. Die man kom voel-voel in die donker verby en net toe Packard regoor my kajuit is, sê hy:

„Hier. Kom hier in.”

En hy kom binne, en Bill agterna. Maar nog voor hulle ’n voet oor die drumpel sit, sit ek al bo-op die bed, vasgekeer in ’n hoek en bitter jammer dat ek ooit gekom het. Hulle kom staan daar vlakby my, met hul hande op die bedreling, en hulle gesels. Ek kon hulle nie sien nie, maar ek kon baie goed uitmaak waar hulle staan aan die whisky wat hulle gedrink het. Ek was bly dat ék nie ook whisky gedrink het nie. Nie dat dit veel verskil sou gemaak het nie, want hulle kon my tog nie uitsnuffel nie omdat ek net nie meer asemgehaal het nie. Ek was te bang. En buitendien, hoe *kon* mens nou ook asemhaal as jy na sülke praatjies luister? Hulle’t die hele tyd ernstig en saggies staan en gesels. Bill wou Turner doodmaak.

„Hy’t gedreig hy gaan verklap, en ek wéét hy gaan,” sê hy. „Selfs al gee ons altwee nou ons voile deel aan hom af, sal dit g’n verskil aan hom maak nie—nie nou, ná die rusie en na wat ons met hom aange- vang het nie. So waar soos ek lewe, hy sal kroongetuie word, hoor wat ek vir jou sê. Ek sê vir jou, ons moet hom van die gras afmaak.” „Ek dink ook so,” sê Packard stilweg.

„Verduiwels, ek het al net begin dink jy wil nie. Nou toe, dan’s alles mos nou reg. Kom ons gaan handel die sakie af.”

„Net ’n oomblik. Ek het nog nie kans gehad om my sê te sê nie. Luister eers na my. Skietery is ’n goeie ding, maar daar’s stiller maniere as die ding dan nou eenmaal gedoen *moet* word. Maar wat ék sê, is dit: hoekom nou die galg gaan uittart as mens kan kry wat jy wil hê sónder om jou in die gevaar te dompel? Is dit nie waar nie, he?”

„Dis waar, ja. Maar hoe gaan jy dit dié keer regkry?”

„Ek sal jou sê wat my plan is: ons snuffel nou hier rond en maak alles in die kajuite bymekaar wat ons dalk nie netnou raakgesien het nie. Dan steek ons oor wal toe en bêre die goed daar. En ons lê en wag. Ek sê jou, dit gaan nie veel langer as nog twee uur duur voor dié wrak flenters breek en afdryf nie. Sien jy nou? Dan versuip hy—en dit sal sy eie vervlakste skuld wees. Ek dink dis ’n baie beter plan as om hom te vermoor. Ek hou nie daarvan om ’n man dood te maak as ek die saak op ’n ander manier kan oplos nie. Daar’s geen sin in nie, en dis ook nie christelik nie. Is ek reg of verkeerd?”

„Ja, dit klink vir my reg. Maar sê nou die wrak breek nié stukkend en dryf af nie?”

„Dan kan ons buitendien maar twee uur wag en sien wat gebeur.” „Nou goed dan. Kom.”

Hulle loop uit en ek maak my uit die voete, yskoud van die angs- sweet. So vinnig as ek kan, skarrel ek voorkant toe. Dis pikgitstik- donker daar, maar ek fluister half hardop: „Jim!” En sommer hier kortby my elmboog gee hy antwoord met ’n soort kreungeluid. „Opskud, Jim,” sê ek. „Daar’s nie nou tyd vir rondlê en kreun nie.

Daar’s ’n spul moordenaars daar oorkant en as ons nie gou hulle bootjie opspoor en dit laat wegdrywe sodat hulle hier vasgekeer word nie, dan gaan

een van hulle in 'n lelike penarie sit. Maar as ons hulle skuitjie kry, dan kan ons hulle áltnal in die sop laat beland. Dan kan die sherrif hulle hier kom haal. Kom nou, gouspeel! Ek sal hier aan die bakboord gaan soek. Kyk jy daar by die stuurboord. Begin daar by ons vlot, en . .

„Ai, jimmeltjie tog! *Vlot?* Maar daar *is* g'n vlot meer nie. Hy't losgebreek en afgedrywe. En hier sit ons . . .”

SECTION 13

Well, I caught my breath and most fainted. Shut up on a wreck with such a gang as that! But it warn't no time to be sentimentering. We'd got to find that boat, now—had to have it for ourselves. So we went aquaking and shaking down the stabboard side, and slow work it was, too—seemed a week before we got to the stern. No sign of a boat. Jim said he didn't believe he could go any further—so scared he hadn't hardly any strength left, he said. But I said come on, if we get left on this wreck, we are in a fix, sure. So on we prowled, again. We struck for the stern of the texas, and found it, and then scrabbled along forwards on the skylight, hanging on from shutter to shutter, for the edge of the skylight was in the water. When we got pretty close to the cross-hall door, there was the skiff, sure enough! I could just barely see her. I felt ever so thankful. In another second I would a been aboard of her; but just then the door opened. One of the men stuck his head out, only about a couple of foot from me, and I thought I was gone; but he jerked it in again, and says:

"Heave that blame lantern out o' sight, Bill!"

He flung a bag of something into the boat, and then got in himself, and set down. It was Packard. Then Bill *he* come out and got in. Packard says, in a low voice:

"All ready—shove off!"

I couldn't hardly hang onto the shutters, I was so weak.

But Bill says:

“Hold on—’d you go through him?”

“No. Didn’t you?”

“No. So he’s got his share o’ the cash, yet.”

“Well, then, come along—no use to take truck and leave money.”

“Say—won’t he suspicion what we’re up to?”

“Maybe he won’t. But we got to have it anyway. Come along.”

So they got out and went in.

The door slammed to, because it was on the careened side; and in a half second I was in the boat, and Jim come a tumbling after me. I out with my knife and cut the rope, and away we went!

We didn’t touch an oar, and we didn’t speak nor whisper, nor hardly even breathe. We went gliding swift along, dead silent, past the tip of the paddle-box, and past the stern; then in a second or two more we was a hundred yards below the wreck, and the darkness soaked her up, every last sign of her, and we was safe, and knowed it.

When we was three or four hundred yards down stream, we see the lantern show like a little spark at the texas door, for a second, and we knowed by that that the rascals had missed their boat, and was beginning to understand that they was in just as much trouble, now, as Jim Turner was.

Then Jim manned the oars, and we took out after our raft. Now was the first time that I begun to worry about the men—I reckon I hadn't had time to before. I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix. I says to myself, there ain't no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself, yet, and then how would I like it? So says I to Jim:

“The first light we see, we'll land a hundred yards below it or above it, in a place where it's a good hiding-place for you and the skiff, and then I'll go and fix up some kind of a yarn, and get somebody to go for that gang and get them out of their scrape, so they can be hung when their time comes.”

But that idea was a failure; for pretty soon it begun to storm again, and this time worse than ever. The rain poured down, and never a light showed; everybody in bed, I reckon. We boomed along down the river, watching for lights and watching for our raft. After a long time the rain let up, but the clouds staid, and the lightning kept whimpering, and by-and-by a flash showed us a black thing ahead, floating, and we made for it.

It was the raft, and mighty glad was we to get aboard of it again. We seen a light, now, away down to the right, on shore. So I said I would go for it. The skiff was half full of plunder which that gang had stole, there on the wreck. We hustled it onto the raft in a pile, and I told Jim to float along down, and show a light when he judged he had gone about two mile, and keep it burning till I come; then I manned my oars and shoved for the light. As I got down towards it, three or four more showed—up on a hillside. It was a village. I

closed in above the shore-light, and laid on my oars and floated. As I went by, I see it was a lantern hanging on the jackstaff of a double-hull ferry-boat. I skimmed around for the watchman, a-wondering whereabouts he slept: and by-and-by I found him roosting on the bitts, forward, with his head down between his knees. I give his shoulder two or three little shoves, and begun to cry.

He stirred up, in a kind of a startlish way; but when he see it was only me, he took a good gap and stretch, and then he says:

“Hello, what’s up? Don’t cry, bub. What’s the trouble?”

I says:

“Pap, and mam, and sis, and——”

Then I broke down. He says:

“Oh, dang it, now, *don’t* take on so, we all has to have our troubles and this’n ’ll come out all right. What’s the matter with ’em?”

“They’re—they’re—are you the watchman of the boat?”

“Yes,” he says, kind of pretty-well-satisfied like. “I’m the captain and the owner, and the mate, and the pilot, and watchman, and head deck-hand; and sometimes I’m the freight and passengers. I ain’t as rich as old Jim Hornback, and I can’t be so blame’ generous and good to Tom, Dick and Harry as what he is, and slam around money the way he does; but I’ve told him a many a time ’t I wouldn’t trade places with him; for,

says I, a sailor's life's the life for me, and I'm derved if I'd live two mile out o' town, where there ain't nothing ever goin' on, not for all his spondulicks^{e1} and as much more on top of it. Says I——"

I broke in and says:

"They're in an awful peck of trouble, and——"

"*Who* is?"

"Why, pap, and mam, and sis, and Miss Hooker; and if you'd take your ferry-boat and go up there——"

"Up where? Where are they?"

"On the wreck."

"What wreck?"

"Why, there ain't but one."

"What, you don't mean the *Walter Scott*^{e2}?"

"Yes."

"Good land! what are they doin' *there*, for gracious sakes?"

"Well, they didn't go there a-purpose."

"I bet they didn't! Why, great goodness, there ain't no chance for 'em if they don't git off mighty quick! Why, how in the nation did they ever git into such a scrape?"

"Easy enough. Miss Hooker was a-visiting, up there to the town——"

"Yes, Booth's Landing—go on."

“She was a-visiting, there at Booth’s Landing, and just in the edge of the evening she started over with her nigger woman in the horse-ferry, to stay all night at her friend’s house, Miss What-you-may-call-her, I disremember her name, and they lost their steering-oar, and swung around and went a-floating down, stern-first, about two mile, and saddle-baggsed on the wreck, and the ferry man and the nigger woman and the horses was all lost, but Miss Hooker she made a grab and got aboard the wreck. Well, about an hour after dark, we come along down in our trading-scow, and it was so dark we didn’t notice the wreck till we was right on it; and so we saddle-baggsed; but all of us was saved but Bill Whipple—and oh, he was the best cretur!—I most wish’t it had been me, I do.”

“My George! It’s the beatenest thing I ever struck. And *then* what did you all do?”

“Well, we hollered and took on, but it’s so wide there, we couldn’t make nobody hear. So pap said somebody got to get ashore and get help somehow. I was the only one that could swim, so I made a dash for it, and Miss Hooker she said if I didn’t strike help sooner, come here and hunt up her uncle, and he’d fix the thing. I made the land about a mile below, and been fooling along ever since, trying to get people to do something, but they said. ‘What, in such a night and such a current? there ain’t no sense in it; go for the steam-ferry.’ Now if you’ll go, and——”

“By Jackson, I’d *like* to, and blame it I don’t know but I will; but who in the dingnation’s agoin’ to *pay* for it? Do you reckon your pap——”

“Why *that’s* all right. Miss Hooker she told me, *particular*, that her uncle Hornback——”

“Great guns! is *he* her uncle? Looky here, you break for that light over yonder-way, and turn out west when you git there, and about a quarter of a mile out you’ll come to the tavern; tell ’em to dart you out to Jim Hornback’s and he’ll foot the bill. And don’t you fool around any, because he’ll want to know the news. Tell him I’ll have his niece all safe before he can get to town. Hump yourself, now; I’m agoing up around the corner here, to roust out my engineer.”

I struck for the light, but as soon as he turned the corner I went back and got into my skiff and bailed her out and then pulled up shore in the easy water about six hundred yards, and tucked myself in among some woodboats; for I couldn’t rest easy till I could see the ferry-boat start. But take it all around, I was feeling ruther comfortable on accounts of taking all this trouble for that gang, for not many would a done it. I wished the widow knowed about it. I judged she would be proud of me for helping these rapsCALLIONS, because rapsCALLIONS and dead beats is the kind the widow and good people takes the most interest in^{e3}.

Well, before long, here comes the wreck, dim and dusky, sliding along down! A kind of cold shiver went through me, and then I struck out for her. She was very deep, and I see in a minute there warn’t much chance for anybody being alive in her. I pulled all around her and hollered a little, but there wasn’t any answer; all dead still. I felt a little bit heavy-hearted about the gang, but not much, for I reckoned if they could stand it, I could.

Then here comes the ferry-boat; so I shoved for the middle of the river on a long down-stream slant; and when I judged I was out of eye-reach, I laid on my oars, and looked back and see her go and smell around the wreck for Miss Hooker's remainders, because the captain would know her uncle Hornback would want them; and then pretty soon the ferry-boat give it up and went for shore, and I laid into my work and went a-booming down the river.

It did seem a powerful long time before Jim's light showed up; and when it did show, it looked like it was a thousand mile off. By the time I got there the sky was beginning to get a little gray in the east; so we struck for an island, and hid the raft, and sunk the skiff, and turned in and slept like dead people.

Chapter 13

Ek het my asem vinnig ingetrek en so hittete flou geword. Vasgekeer op 'n wrak saam met só 'n spul! Maar daar was g'n tyd vir floeferigheid nie. Ons *moes* nou doodeenvoudig net daardie skuit in die hande kry en self daarmee wegkom. Bewerig en bibberig begin ons toe ons pad oorvoel na die stuurboordkant en dit het só stadig gegaan, dat dit so waar gelyk het of dit 'n week duur voor ons eindelik by die agterstewe kom. G'n teken van 'n skuit nie. Jim was vas oortuig daarvan dat hy g'n tree meer kon verder nie—hy was so bang dat daar net nie meer krag in sy litte oor was nie, het hy gesê. Maar ek het hom laat saamkom. Want as ons daar op die wrak vasgekeer raak, dan sit ons in die pekel. Dus is ons maar weer verder, soek-soek, dié keer na die offisierskwartier se voorstewe toe. Daar- vandaan is ons al met die ligluike langs, hang-hang van luik tot luik, want die een kant het in die water gelê. En toe ons eindelik hier kort- by die dwarssaal se deur kom, gewaar ons die skuit! Ek kon hom net-net daar in die donkerte uitmaak. Hemel, was ek bly! Nog een oomblik, en ons sou veilig aan boord gewip het. Maar net toe gaan die deur oop. Een van die kêrels steek sy kop net 'n paar voet van my af uit, maar toe ek dink dis nou klaarpraat met my, pluk hy dit weer terug, en sê: „Gooi daardie lantern weg, Bill!”

Hy smyt 'n sak vol goed in die skuit, klouter dan self ook in en gaan sit. Dit was Packard. Toe kom Bill ook uit en klim in.

„Goed,” sê Packard saggies. „Weg is ons.”

Ek was nou al so swak dat ek beswaarlik aan die luik kon bly hang. Toe vra Bill skielik:

„Hokaai. Het jy hóm ook deurgesoek?”

„Nee. Het jy dan nie?”

„Nee. Hy't dus nog sy deel van die geld by hom.”

„Nou kom dan. Daar's g'n sin in om die goed te vat en die geld te laat staan nie.”

„Maar luister: sal hy nie die dalk 'n snuf in die neus kry oor wat ons gaan aanvang nie?”

„Miskien nie. Ons moet dit in elk geval tóg kry. Komaan.”

Toe klim hulle uit die skuit en gaan terug. Die deur klap toe, want dis aan die skuins kant van die boot; en 'n halwe sekonde later sit ek binne-in die skuit en Jim tuimel agterna. Ek pluk my mes uit en sny die tou los—en daar trek ons!

Ons het dit nie gewaag om 'n spaan aan te raak nie, en ons het geen enkele woord gesê nie, wat nog gefluister; hene, ons het amper nie eers asemgehaal nie! Vinnig het ons deur die donkerte weggedryf, morsdoodstil, verby die skeprat se kas, verby die voorstewe; en 'n paar oomblikke later was ons 'n honderd tree onderkant die wrak, en die boot het in die donker verdwyn, toetentaal, asof die duisternis hom ingesluk het; en nou was ons veilig, en ons het dit geweet.

Ons was so 'n drie, vierhonderd tree stroom-af toe ons die lantern soos 'n klein vuurvonkie by die buitedeur van die offisiërskwartier sien verskyn, en besef dat die twee skurke nou hul skuit soek en besig was om te ontdek dat hulle in dieselfde penarie as Jim Turner was.

Toe vat Jim die spane vas en ons begin ons eie vlot agternasit. Vir die eerste keer het ek skielik begin bekommerd raak oor die mans—tot dusver was daar seker nie tyd vir so iets nie. Ek het gesit en dink oor hoe gruwelik dit was—seifs vir moordenaars—om in so 'n ge-mors te beland. Sê nou ek word self nog eendag 'n moordenaar—hoe sal *ek* daarvan hou?

Ek draai dus na Jim toe en ek sê: „Kyk., nes ons weer 'n liggie sien. gaan land ons 'n honderd tree hoër op of laer af, net waar ons vir jou 'n goeie wegkruipplek kan kry waar niemand die skuit sal gewaar nie. Dan sal ek 'n storie opmaak en iemand gaan soek om daardie klomp uit hulle penarie te gaan red, sodat hulle maar liewerster opgehang kan word as hulle uurtjie slaan.”

Maar van dié plan het daar niks gekom nie, want net daarna het dit van vooraf begin storm, nog erger as tevore. Die reën het een-voudig neergestroom en nêrens was daar 'n liggie te sien nie. Almal was seker al aan die slaap. Ons het al met die rivier afgeduiwel en die heeltyd bly sit en rondsoek na ligte en na ons vlot. Na 'n lang ruk het die reën begin bedaar,

maar die wolke het gebly, en die weerlig het nog steeds neergebewe; en skielik sien ons in die lig van een straal 'n swart ding wat hier naby ons afdryf, en ons mik soontoe.

Dit was die vlot—en was ons bly om weer daarop te land! Net toe het ons 'n lig ook gewaar, doer na die regterkant toe af, op die oewer. Ek sou soontoe gaan, het ek aangekondig. Die skuit was halfvol met buit wat die bende daar op die wrak vasgelê het. Dié het ons eers op die vlot opgestawel en ek het Jim aangesê om maar solank verder af te dryf en 'n lig aan te steek wanneer hy dink hy's sowat twee myl laer af, en dan te sorg dat die ding blý brand tot ek terugkom. Toe tel ek my spane op en begin roei in die koers van die lig. Met die nader- kom, het daar nog drie of vier ander ook begin wys—hoog teen 'n skuinste. Dit was 'n dorpie. Ek het bokant die wal se lig kant toe geroei, my spane uit die water getrek en verder gedryf. Met die ver- bykom kon ek sien dat dit 'n lantern was wat daar aan die vlagstok van 'n pontboot met 'n dubbele romp hang. Ek het rondgeloer om die nagwag te probeer sien en gewonder waarlangs hy sit en slaap. Na 'n ruk het ek hom opgespoor, aan die dut op een van die rolle tou aan die voorkant. Ek het twee of drie keer liggies aan sy skouer gepluk en toe begin huil.

Hy't half verward wakker geskrik, maar toe hy gewaar dat dit maar net ek is, gaap hy 'n slag luidrugtig, rek hom uit, en vra:

„En toe? Wat makeer? Moenie huil nie, boet. Wat het gebeur?”

„Dis . . . dis pa, en ma, en sussie, en . . .” Daar breek ek af.

„Toe nou, toe nou,” paai hy. „Moenie so te kere gaan daaroor nie. Ons het maar almal ons probleme. Die saak sal wel opgelos word. Wat makeer hulle?”

„Hulle . . . hulle't... Is oom die nagwag hier op die boot?”

„Ja,” sê hy, so half kokkedoor-in-sy-skik. „Ek is die kaptein en die eienaar, en die skeepsmaat, en die loods, en die nagwag, en die hoof- matroos; en partykeer is ek die vrag en die passasiers ook. Ek is nou nie so ryk soos ou Jim Hornback nie en ek kan nie so verdeksels vrygewig wees teenoor elke Jan Rap en sy maat soos wat hý is nie; en ek kan nie geld rondgooi soos hy nie; maar ek het hom slag op slag al gesê ek ruil wraggies nie met hom nie. Nee kyk, sê ek vir hom, 'n matroos se lewe is nou net die lewe vir my. Moenie dink ék sal twee myl buitekant die dorp loop woon op 'n plek waar daar nooit iets aangaan nie! Nog nooit, al gee jy my ál sy geld pasella en nog 'n spul goed op die koop toe. Nee, sê ek . . .”

„Hulle sit in 'n baie groot penarie . . .” val ek hom in die rede.

„Wie is?”

„Pa en ma en sussie en juffrou Hooker. En as oom met oom se pontboot soontoe kan ry, dan . . .”

„Waarnatoe? Waar's hulle?”

„Op die wrak.”

„Wat se wrak?”

„Daar's mos net één wrak.”

„Jy bedoel tog nie die *Walter Scott* nie?”

„Ja.”

„My goeie genugtig! Wat op dees aarde seek hulle *daar*?”

„Hulle’t nie moedswillig soontoe gegaan nie, sien.”

„Dit glo ek jou goed. Maar my hemeltjie dan tog, hulle het nie ’n kat se kans nie, tensy hulle baie gou daar wegkom! Hoe de duiwel het hulle ooit in so ’n penarie beland?”

„Dis maklik. Juffrou Hooker was op kuier daar in die dorp . . .” „Ja, ja. Booth’s Landing. Gaan voort.”

„Sy’t daar in Booth’s Landing gekuier. En net so met skemer is sy en haar negervrou toe in die perdepont oor die rivier om die nag by haar vriendin te gaan deurbring—juffrou Dinges, ek vergeet alewig haar naam. En toe val die stuurspaan oorboord en die skuit swaai om en begin afdryf, stertkant eerste, ’n goeie twee myl ver, tot hulle in die wrak vasdryf. Die pontbaas en die negerin en die perde is almal daarmee heen, maar juffrou Watson het êrens vashouplek gekry en op die wrak geklouter. Nou ja, so ’n uur ná sononder kom ons toe daar verby op ons handelskuit en dit was so donker dat ons die wrak eers gewaar het toe ons téén die ding vasry. Gelukkig is ons almal gered, behalwe arme Bill Whipple—o, hy was so ’n dierbare ou —en ek wens dit was maar liewers ek sêlf, rêrig.”

„Liewe hemel. Sowat het ek nog nooit gehoor nie. En toe? Wat maak julle *toe*?”

„Wel, ons het geskree en te kere gegaan, maar die rivier is daar so breed dat niemand iets kon hoor nie. Toe sê Pa een van ons moet probeer uitkom wal toe en gaan hulp sock. Ek was die enigste wat kon swem, toe’t ek maar die kans gevat. En juffrou Hooker het gesê as ek nie hoër op al iemand kry om te help nie, moet ek hier na haar oom kom seek, hy sal ons regsien. Ek het omtrent ’n myl laer af aan wal gekom en van toe af sukkel ek al om iemand te kry wat kan kom help. Maar almal sê net: ‚Wat, op só ’n nag en in só ’n stroom? Onmoontlik. Gaan vra liewer daar by die stoompont.’ Nouja, as oom soontoe kan gaan . .

„Genugtig, ek sou *graag* gaan. Maar wie dink jy gaan daarvoor *betaal*? Dink jy jou pa . .

„Moenie dááror worrie nie, oom,” se ek. „Juffrou Hooker het my spesiaal gesê haar oom Hornback . . .”

„Goeiste ons! Is *hy* haar oom? Nou kyk hier: sien jy die lig daar- doer? Maak nou dat jy daar kom; en daar swenk jy wes, en so ’n kwartmyl verder sal jy by die kroeg aankom. Sê vir hulle daar hulle moet jou uitneem na Jim Hornback toe, hy sal betaal. En moenie draai langs die pad nie, want hy sal wil hoor wat gebeur het. Sê vir hom ek sal sy niggie veilig op droë aarde hê nog voor hy in die dorp is. Opskud nou. Ek gaan net my masjins hier om die draai wakker maak.”

Ek kry koers na die lig toe, maar net toe hy om die hoek verdwyn het, wikkkel ek terug skuit toe en maak dat ek wegkom. Eers roei ek so ’n seshonderd tree stroom-op in die stil kantwater en gaan lê daar tussen ’n paar

houtskuite en wag—want ek sou g'n rus vir my siel hê voor ek die pontboot sien wegtrek nie. Eintlik het ek danig in my skik gevoel oor al die moeite wat ek vir die skurke gedoen het, want daar's maar min mense wat so iets sou doen. Ek het gewens die weduwee kon daarvan weet. Sy sou alte trots op my gewees het oor ek dié klomp skobbejakke gehelp het—want skobbejakke en skooiers is mos die soort ding waarin die weduwee en goeie mense die meeste belang stel.

En toe, glad nie lank daarna nie, hier sien ek die wrak afgedryf kom, 'n dowwe, swarterige kol in die water! 'n Koue rilling het teen my rug afgeglip. Sonder om te wag, begin ek dadelik soontoe aan- stoot. Die wrak het taamlik diep gelê en ek kon gou sien dat daar nie veel kans was dat daar iemand lewendig aan boord kon wees nie. Ek het rondom die ding geroei en 'n slag of wat geskreeu, maar daar was g'n antwoord nie; alles doodstil. Ek het 'n bietjie jammer gevoel oor die skurke, maar ook nie té veel nie—want as hulle dit kon verduur, nou ja, dan ék ook.

Toe begin die pontboot naderkom en ek kry koers na die middel van die rivier toe sodat ek stadig, in 'n wye boog, kan wegdrywe. So- dra dit vir my lyk of ek nou buite gesig is, pak ek die spane en kyk 'n slag terug, en sien hoe die pontboot al om die wrak rondsnuffel op soek na juffrou Hooker se oorblyfsels, want die kaptein sou mos weet dat haar oom Hornback graag die lyk sou wou hê. Maar na 'n ruk gooi die pontboot tou op en vaar terug oewer toe, en ek buig vooroor en kry koers stroom-af.

Dit het na 'n derduiwelse lang tyd gelyk voor ek eindelijk Jim se liggie gewaar; en toe ek dit wél sien, het dit gelyk of dit nog 'n duisend myl ver is. Toe ek uiteindelik daar aanland, was die lug net besig om gryserig te word in die ooste, dus het ons maar dadelik 'n eiland gaan soek, die vlot daar weggesteek, die skuit laat sink, en omgerol en soos twee dooies geslaap.

SECTION 14

By-and-by, when we got up, we turned over the truck the gang had stole off of the wreck, and found boots, and blankets, and clothes, and all sorts of other things, and a lot of books, and a spyglass, and three boxes of seegars. We hadn't ever been this rich before, in neither of our lives. The seegars was prime. We laid off all the afternoon in the woods talking, and me reading the books, and having a general good time. I told Jim all about what happened inside the wreck, and at the ferry-boat; and I said these kinds of things was adventures; but he said he didn't want no more adventures. He said that when I went in the texas and he crawled back to get on the raft and found her gone, he nearly died; because he judged it was all up with *him*, anyway it could be fixed; for if he didn't get saved he would get drowned; and if he did get saved, whoever saved him would send him back home so as to get the reward, and then Miss Watson would sell him South, sure. Well, he was right; he was most always right; he had an uncommon level head, for a nigger.

I read considerable to Jim about kings, and dukes, and earls, and such, and how gaudy they dressed, and how much style they put on, and called each other your majesty, and your grace, and your lordship, and so on, 'stead of mister; and Jim's eyes bugged out, and he was interested. He says:

"I didn' know dey was so many un um. I hain't hearn 'bout none un um, skasely, but ole King Sollermun,

unless you counts dem kings dat's in a pack er k'yards. How much do a king git?"

"Get?" I says; "why, they get a thousand dollars a month if they want it; they can have just as much as they want; everything belongs to them."

"*Ain'* dat gay? En what dey got to do, Huck?"

"*They* don't do nothing! Why how you talk. They just set around."

"No—is dat so?"

"Of course it is. They just set around. Except maybe when there's a war; then they go to the war. But other times they just lazy around; or go hawking—just hawking and sp—Sh!—d' you hear a noise?"

We skipped out and looked; but it warn't nothing but the flutter of a steamboat's wheel, away down coming around the point; so we come back.

"Yes," says I, "and other times, when things is dull, they fuss with the parlyment; and if everybody don't go just so he whacks their heads off. But mostly they hang round the harem."

"Roun' de which?"

"Harem."

"What's de harem?"

"The place where he keep his wives. Don't you know about the harem? Solomon had one; he had about a million wives."

“Why, yes, dat’s so; I—I’d done forgot it. A harem’s a bo’d’n-house, I reck’n. Mos’ likely dey has rackety times in de nussery. En I reck’n de wives quarrels considable; en dat ’crease de racket. Yit dey say Sollermun de wises’ man dat ever live’. I doan’ take no stock in dat. Bekase why: would a wise man want to live in de mids’ er sich a blimblammin’ all de time? No—’deed he wouldn’t. A wise man ’ud take en buil’ a biler-factory; en den he could shet *down* de biler-factory when he want to res’.”

“Well, but he *was* the wisest man, anyway; because the widow she told me so, her own self.”

“I doan k’yer what de widder say, he *warn’t* no wise man, nuther. He had some er de dad-fetchedes’ ways I ever see. Does you know ’bout dat chile dat he ’uz gwyne to chop in two^{e1}?”

“Yes, the widow told me all about it.”

“*Well*, den! Warn’ dat de beatenes’ notion in de worl’? You jes’ take en look at it a minute. Dah’s de stump, dah—dat’s one er de women; heah’s you—dat’s de yuther one; I’s Sollermun; en dish-yer dollar bill’s de chile. Bofe un you claims it. What does I do? Does I shin aroun’ mongs’ de neighbors en fine out which un you de bill *do* b’long to, en han’ it over to de right one, all safe en soun’, de way dat anybody dat had any gumption would? No—I take en whack de bill in *two*, en give half un it to you, en de yuther half to de yuther woman. Dat’s de way Sollermun was gwyne to do wid de chile. Now I want to ast you: what’s de use er dat half a bill?—can’t buy noth’n wid it. En what use is a half a chile? I would’n give a dern for a million un um.”

“But hang it, Jim, you’ve clean missed the point—blame it, you’ve missed it a thousand mile.”

“Who? Me? Go ’long. Doan’ talk to *me* ’bout yo’ pints. I reck’n I knows sense when I sees it; en dey ain’ no sense in sich doin’s as dat. De ’spute warn’t ’bout a half a chile, de ’spute was ’bout a whole chile; en de man dat think he kin settle a ’spute ’bout a whole chile wid a half a chile, doan’ know enough to come in out’n de rain. Doan’ talk to me ’bout Sollermun, Huck, I knows him by de back.”

“But I tell you you don’t get the point.”

“Blame de pint! I reck’n I knows what I knows. En mine you, de *real* pint is down funder—it’s down deeper. It lays in de way Sollermun was raised. You take a man dat’s got on’y one er two chillen; is dat man gwyne to be waseful o’ chillen? No, he ain’t; he can’t ’ford it. *He* know how to value ’em. But you take a man dat’s got ’bout five million chillen runnin’ roun’ de house, en it’s diffunt. *He* as soon chop a chile in two as a cat. Dey’s plenty mo’. A chile er two, mo’ er less, warn’t no consekens to Sollermun, dad fetch him!”

I never see such a nigger. If he got a notion in his head once, there warn’t no getting it out again. He was the most down on Solomon of any nigger I ever see. So I went to talking about other kings, and let Solomon slide. I told about Louis Sixteenth that got his head cut off in France long time ago; and about his little boy the dolphin,¹³ that would a been a king, but they took and shut him up in jail, and some say he died there.

“Po’ little chap.”

“But some says he got out and got away, and come to America.”

“Dat’s good! But he’ll be pooty lonesome—dey ain’ no kings here, is dey, Huck?”

“No.”

“Den he cain’t git no situation. What he gwyne to do?”

“Well, I don’t know. Some of them gets on the police^{e2}, and some of them learns people how to talk French.”

“Why, Huck, doan’ de French people talk de same way we does?”

“No, Jim; you couldn’t understand a word they said—not a single word.”

“Well, now, I be ding-busted! How do dat come?”

“I don’t know; but it’s so. I got some of their jabber out of a book. Spose a man was to come to you and say *Polly-voo-franzy*—what would you think?”

“I wouldn’t think nuff’n; I’d take en bust him over de head. Dat is, if he warn’t white. I wouldn’t ’low no nigger to call me dat.”

“Shucks, it ain’t calling you anything. It’s only saying do you know how to talk French.”

“Well, den, why couldn’t he say it?”

“Why, he *is* a-saying it. That’s a Frenchman’s way of saying it.”

“Well, it’s a blame’ ridicklous way, en I doan’ want to

hear no mo' 'bout it. Dey ain' no sense in it."

"Looky here, Jim; does a cat talk like we do?"

"No, a cat don't."

"Well, does a cow?"

"No, a cow don't, nuther."

"Does a cat talk like a cow, or a cow talk like a cat?"

"No, dey don't."

"It's natural and right for 'em to talk different from each other, ain't it?"

"Course."

"And ain't it natural and right for a cat and a cow to talk different from *us*?"

"Why, mos' sholy it is."

"Well, then, why ain't it natural and right for a *Frenchman* to talk different from us? You answer me that."

"Is a cat a man, Huck?"

"No."

"Well, den, dey ain't no sense in a cat talkin' like a man. Is a cow a man?—er is a cow a cat?"

"No, she ain't either of them."

"Well, den, she ain' got no business to talk like either one er the yuther of 'em. Is a Frenchman a man?^{e3}"

“Yes.”

“*Well*, den! Dad blame it, why doan’ he *talk* like a man? You answer me *dat!*”

I see it warn’t no use wasting words—you can’t learn a nigger to argue. So I quit.

Chapter 14

Toe ons naderhand weer opstaan, het ons die klomp goed wat die skurke van die wrak af gesteel het, begin deur- kyk. Daar was stewels en komberse en klere en ’n menigte ander goed, en ’n klomp boeke en ’n verkyker en drie dose sigare. Nog nooit in ons dag des lewens was enigeen van ons al só ryk nie. Die sigare was piekfyn. Ons het die ganse middag daar in die bos gelê en gesels, en ek het in die boeke gelê en lees, en dit was sommer net heerlik. Ek het Jim alles vertel van wat daar op die wrak en by die pontboot gebeur het en ek het gesê dat die goed alles avontuur was. Maar hy’t gesê hy’s nou klaar met avonture. Terwyl ek daar in die offisierskwartier was, het hy glo teruggesluip om die vlot te soek; en toe hy gewaar dat dit weg is, het hy amper net daar omgekap, want hy’t gereken dis nou heeltemal klaarpraat met hom: want as hy nie gered word nie, sou hy verdrink, en as hy gered word, sou die mense wat hom uithaal, hom dadelik terugstuur huis toe om die beloning te kry, en dan sou juffrou Watson hom gewis in die Suide gaan verkoop. En dit was natuurlik die waarheid. Jim was byna altyd reg. Vir ’n neger het hy ’n buitengewone kop op sy skouers gehad.

Ek het vir Jim ’n hele ruk lank gelê en lees van konings en hertoë en grawe en goed, en van hulle deftige klere en hulle swierigheid, en van die manier wat hulle het om mekaar u majesteit en u edele en u hoogheid te noem, in plaas van sommer net meneer. En Jim se oë het skoon uitgepeul, soveel belang het hy gestel.

„Ekket nie geweet daar’s so baie vannie goed nie,” het hy gesê. „Ekket nog nooit van so ’n klomp gehoor nie—net van ou koning Saalmoo, tensy jy die konings in ’n pak kaarte bytel. Hoeffel verdien ’n koning nou juis?”

„Verdien?” vra ek. „Hene, hy kry ’n duisend dollar ’n maand as hy dit wil hê. Hy kan kry net soveel as wat hy wil hê. Alles behoort aan hom.”

„Is dit nou nie vir jou lekker nie, he? En watse werk moet hulle doen, Huck?”

„Hulle werk nie, man! Jy kan tog darem nonsies praat. Hulle lê mos sommer net rond.”

„Nee. Issit rêrig waar?”

„Natuurlik. Hulle lê sommer rond. Behalwe as daar ’n oorlog aan die

gang is, dan gaan hulle soontoe. Anders lê hulle maar luilekker rond. Of hulle gaan jag of. . . Sjuut! Het jy iets gehoor?"

Ons wip daar uit en gaan kyk, maar dit was net die gekabbel van 'n stoomboot se skeprat daar bo om die draai, en ons kom lê dus maar weer.

„Ja,” vertel ek, „en as die lewe nou vervelig raak, torring hulle 'n bietjie met die parlement, en as enigiemand 'n bietjie obsternaat raak, dan word sy kop net-so afgekap. Maar gewoonlik lê hulle in die hareip rond.”

„Waar?"

„Die harem.”

„Wat se ding is die harem?"

„Dis waar hy sy vrouens aanhou. Weet jy dan nie van 'n harem nie? Salomo het een gehad; hy't omtrent 'n miljoen vrouens gehad.” „Ja, dis waar. Ek—ek het net vergeet. 'n Harem klink vir my iets soos 'n losieshuis. Dit gee darem seker 'n groot lawaai in die kinner- kamer af, nê ? En ek sou dink die vrouens petlei 'n lot onner mekaar dit maak die lawaai nog groter. En tog sê hulle Saalmoo was die slimste man wat daar nog gelewe't. Dit geloof ek nie juis nie. Want hoe sal 'n slim man nou met so 'n gerrebeekery al om sy ore kan lewe, hê? Aikóna, dis onmoontlik. 'n Slim man sal eerder vir hom 'n pottefabriek loop bou. En as hy dan wil rus, dan *slyt* hy daai fabriek net so toe.”

„Maar hy wás die slimste man wat daar nog gelewe het, want die weduwee het my dit self vertel!"

„Traak my nie wat die weduwee sê nie. Hy *was* g'n slim man nie. Sommer pleinweg moedswillig, as jy my vra. Hê-jy miskien al gehoor van die kind wat hy middeldeer wou loop kap?"

„Ja, die weduwee het my dit alles vertel.”

„Nou *toe* dan! Is dit miskien nie moedswillig en onnooslik nie? Kyk net 'n slaggie daarna. Sien jy daai stomp daar? Goed. Dis nou een vannie vrouens. En hier's jy—dissie anner vrou. Ek is Saalmoo. Hierie dollarnoot is die kind. Julie wil altwee die ding hê. En wat maak ek? Loop vra ek bietjie by die bure laans en vind uit aan wie die kind rêrig behoort en gee hom dan piekfyn en gesond vir sy ma trug soos enige mens sal maak wat bietjie pit in sy kop het? Nee. Ek vat die noot en ek sny hom middeldeer en ek gee vir jou helfte en vir die anner vrou ok helfte. Dis mos wat daai Saalmoo met. die kind wou aanvang. Nou vra ek jou: wat bteken 'n halwe nootjie, he? Jy kan g'n niks daarmee koop eers nie. En wat beteken 'n halwe kind? Ek willie 'n miljoen vannie goed persent hê nie!"

„Maar waarlik, Jim, jy praat mos nou skoon verby die punt! Nou't jy die kat mos aan die stert beet!"

„Wie, ek? Loop blaas jy doppies. Moenie met my van katte kom praat nie. Ek ken verstand as ek horn sien, en daar sit g'n verstand in 'n ding soos dáái nie. Hulle't nie gepetlei oor 'n halwe kind nie: hulle't gepetlei oor 'n *jille* kind. En die ou wat dink hy kan 'n pet- leiry oor 'n jille kind gaan regmaak met 'n halwe eneljie, hy moet maar yt my pad yt bly. Moenie jy met my kom

praat oor Saalmoo nie. Ek ken hom van agterstevoor af trug.”

„Maar ek sê jou jy’t die kat aan die stert beet!”

„Na die maan met jou katte en hul stêre! Ek weet wat ek wcet. Ek sê vir jou die rêrige saak lê verder, hy lê dieper. Dit lê innie manier wat hulle vir Saalmoo grootgemaak het. Vat nou ’n man wat net een of twee kinnars het: dink jy hý sal loop mors met kinnars? Nooit! Hy kannit nie bekostig nie. Hy weet mos wat hulle werd is. Maar vat nou ’n man wat vyfmiljoen kinnars het wat orals in sy liuis rondhol— dan’s dit ’n anner saak. Hy sal ’n kind net so maklik kop afkap as ’n kat. Daar’s mos nog baie! Wat sal een of twee kinnars meer of minner nou aan Saalmoo verskil maak?”

Ek het nog nie Jim se gelyke gesien nie. As hy eenmaal ’n ding in sy kop gekry het, dan kry niks dit weer daar úit nie. Ek het nog nooit ’n neger ontmoet wat só kwaai teen Salomo gepraat het nie. Toe begin ek maar liewerster oor ander konings praat en ek los Salomo uit. Ek vertel hom van Lodewyk die Sestiende wat lank gelede in Frankryk gemaak het dat hulle sy kop afgekap het; en van sy seun- tjie, die dolfyn, wat koning sou geword het—maar toe’t hulle hom mos gevang en in die tronk opgesluit, en party mense weet nou te vertel dat hy daar dood is.

„Arme outjie.”

„Maar daar’s ander wat sê hy’t uitgekóm en weggevlug, hier na Amerika toe.”

„Mooi. Maar hy sal maar half allenig voel hier. Hier’s mos nie anner konings nie, is hier, Huck?”

„Nee.”

„Dan kan hy nêrens ’n jop kry nie. Wat gaan hy maak?”

„Ek weet nie juis nie. Party van hulle word glo polisiemanne, en ander leer mense Frans praat.”

„Wat praat jy nou, Huck? Praat die mense in Frankryk dan nie sos ons nie?”

„Nee, Jim. Jy sal g’n woord verstaan van wat hulle praat nie—nie ’n dooie woord nie.”

„Nou toe nou, slaat my dood. Hoe’t dit dan so gekom?”

„Ek weet nie. Maar so is dit. Ek het eenkeer in ’n boek iets van hulle praterij gelees. Sê nou ’n man kom na jou toe en hy sê *„Polliewoe fransie?”* Wat sal jy daarvan dink?”

„Ek sal g’n niks dink nie. Ek sal hom oor die kop foeter. Dis nou te sê as hy nie ’n witman is nie. Ek sal g’n neger toelaat om my so uit te skel nie!”

„Gits man, dis nie uitskel nie. Hy vra maar net of jy kan Frans praat.”

„Nou vir wat kan jy nie so *sê* nie?”

„Maar dit *is* wat hy sê. Dis ’n Fransman se *manier* om dit te sê.”

„Dis ’n verspotte manier en ek wil daar niks meer van hoor nie. Daar’s g’n sin in nie.”

„Wag nou eers, Jim. Kyk: kan ’n kat soos ons praat?”

„Nee.”

„En ’n koei?”

„Nee, ’n koei ok nie.”

„En praat ’n kat miskien soos ’n koei, of ’n koei soos ’n kat ?” „Nee.”

„Dis dus doodnatuurlik en reg dat hulle elkeen op sy eie manier praat, of hoe?”

„Tierlik.”

„En is dit nie doodnatuurlik en reg dat ’n kat en ’n koei anders praat as ons nie?”

„Natierlik, ja.”

„Nou hoekom is dit dan nie doodnatuurlik en reg dat ’n Fransman anders as ons praat nie? Verduidelik jy nou vir my dít!”

„Is ’n kat ’n mens, Huck?”

„Nee.”

„Nou ja, dan’s dit mos verspot as ’n kat soos ’n mens wil praat. En is ’n koei ’n mens ? Of is ’n koei ’n kat ?”

„Nee. ’n Koei is g’neen van die twee nie.”

„Nou ja, dan’t ’n koei ok g’n reg om sos een van die anner twee te praat nie. En nou: is ’n Fransman ’n mens ?”

„Ja!”

„Nou toe nou! Hoekom *praat* hy dan nie soos ’n mens nie? Vertel jy vir my dít!”

Ek kon nou sien dit help nie om nog woorde te vermors nie. Mens kan nie ’n neger leer redeneer nie. Toe los ek dit maar liewers.

SECTION 15

We judged that three nights more would fetch us to Cairo^{e1}, at the bottom of Illinois, where the Ohio River comes in, and that was what we was after. We would sell the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio amongst the free States, and then be out of trouble.¹⁴

Well, the second night a fog begun to come on, and we made for a tow-head to tie to, for it wouldn't do to try to run in fog; but when I paddled ahead in the canoe, with the line, to make fast, there warn't anything but little saplings to tie to. I passed the line around one of them right on the edge of the cut bank, but there was a stiff current, and the raft come booming down so lively she tore it out by the roots and away she went. I see the fog closing down, and it made me so sick and scared I couldn't budge for most a half a minute it seemed to me—and then there warn't no raft in sight; you couldn't see twenty yards. I jumped into the canoe and run back to the stern and grabbed the paddle and set her back a stroke. But she didn't come. I was in such a hurry I hadn't untied her. I got up and tried to untie her, but I was so excited my hands shook so I couldn't hardly do anything with them.

As soon as I got started I took out after the raft, hot and heavy, right down the tow-head. That was all right as far as it went, but the tow-head warn't sixty yards long, and the minute I flew by the foot of it I shot out into the solid white fog, and hadn't no more idea which way I was going than a dead man.

Thinks I, it won't do to paddle; first I know I'll run into the bank or a tow-head or something; I got to set still and float, and yet it's mighty fidgety business to have to hold your hands still at such a time. I whooped and listened. Away down there, somewheres, I hears a small whoop, and up comes my spirits. I went tearing after it, listening sharp to hear it again. The next time it come, I see I warn't heading for it but heading away to the right of it. And the next time, I was heading away to the left of it—and not gaining on it much, either, for I was flying around, this way and that and 'tother, but it was going straight ahead all the time.

I did wish the fool would think to beat a tin pan, and beat it all the time, but he never did, and it was the still places between the whoops that was making the trouble for me. Well, I fought along, and directly I hears the whoop *behind* me. I was tangled good, now. That was somebody else's whoop, or else I was turned around.

I throwed the paddle down. I heard the whoop again; it was behind me yet, but in a different place; it kept coming, and kept changing its place, and I kept answering, till by-and-by it was in front of me again and I knowed the current had swung the canoe's head down stream and I was all right, if that was Jim and not some other raftsmen hollering. I couldn't tell nothing about voices in a fog, for nothing don't look natural nor sound natural in a fog.

The whooping went on, and in about a minute I come a booming down on a cut bank with smoky ghosts of big trees on it, and the current throwed me off to the left and shot by, amongst a lot of snags that fairly roared,

the current was tearing by them so swift.

In another second or two it was solid white and still again. I set perfectly still, then, listening to my heart thump, and I reckon I didn't draw a breath while it thumped a hundred.

I just give up, then. I knowed what the matter was. That cut bank was an island, and Jim had gone down 'tother side of it. It warn't no tow-head, that you could float by in ten minutes. It had the big timber of a regular island; it might be five or six mile long and more than a half a mile wide.

I kept quiet, with my ears cocked, about fifteen minutes, I reckon. I was floating along, of course, four or five mile an hour; but you don't ever think of that. No, you *feel* like you are laying dead still on the water; and if a little glimpse of a snag slips by, you don't think to yourself how fast *you're* going, but you catch your breath and think, my! how that snag's tearing along. If you think it ain't dismal and lonesome out in a fog that way, by yourself, in the night, you try it once—you'll see.

Next, for about a half an hour, I whoops now and then; at last I hears the answer a long ways off, and tries to follow it, but I couldn't do it, and directly I judged I'd got into a nest of tow-heads, for I had little dim glimpses of them on both sides of me, sometimes just a narrow channel between; and some that I couldn't see, I knowed was there, because I'd hear the wash of the current against the old dead brush and trash that hung over the banks. Well, I warn't long losing the whoops, down amongst the tow-heads; and I only tried to chase

them a little while, anyway, because it was worse than chasing a Jack-o-lantern^{e2}. You never knowed a sound dodge around so, and swap places so quick and so much.

I had to claw away from the bank pretty lively, four or five times, to keep from knocking the islands out of the river; and so I judged the raft must be butting into the bank every now and then, or else it would get further ahead and clear out of hearing—it was floating a little faster than what I was.

Well, I seemed to be in the open river again, by-and-by, but I couldn't hear no sign of a whoop nowheres. I reckoned Jim had fetched up on a snag, maybe, and it was all up with him. I was good and tired, so I laid down in the canoe and said I wouldn't bother no more. I didn't want to go to sleep, of course; but I was so sleepy I couldn't help it; so I thought I would take just one little cat-nap.

But I reckon it was more than a cat-nap, for when I waked up the stars was shining bright, the fog was all gone, and I was spinning down a big bend stern first. First I didn't know where I was; I thought I was dreaming; and when things begun to come back to me, they seemed to come up dim out of last week.

It was a monstrous big river here, with the tallest and the thickest kind of timber on both banks; just a solid wall, as well as I could see, by the stars. I looked away down stream, and seen a black speck on the water. I took out after it; but when I got to it it warn't nothing but a couple of saw-logs made fast together. Then I see another speck, and chased that; then another, and this

time I was right. It was the raft.

When I got to it Jim was setting there with his head down¹³ between his knees, asleep, with his right arm hanging over the steering oar. The other oar was smashed off, and the raft was littered up with leaves and branches and dirt. So she'd had a rough time.

I made fast and laid down under Jim's nose on the raft, and begun to gap, and stretch my fists out against Jim, and says:

"Hello, Jim, have I been asleep? Why didn't you stir me up?"

"Goodness gracious, is dat you, Huck? En you ain' dead—you ain' drowned—you's back agin? It's too good for true, honey, it's too good for true. Lemme look at you, chile, lemme feel o' you. No, you ain' dead! you's back agin, 'live en soun', jis de same ole Huck—de same ole Huck, thanks to goodness!"

"What's the matter with you, Jim? You been a drinking?"

"Drinkin'? Has I ben a drinkin'? Has I had a chance to be a drinkin'?"

"Well, then, what makes you talk so wild?"

"How does I talk wild?"

"*How?* why, hain't you been talking about my coming back, and all that stuff, as if I'd been gone away?"

"Huck—Huck Finn, you look me in de eye; look me in de eye. *Hain't* you ben gone away?"

"Gone away? Why, what in the nation do you mean? I hain't been gone anywheres. Where would I go to?"

"Well, looky here, boss, dey's sumf'n wrong, dey is. Is I *me*, or who *is* I? Is I heah, or whah *is* I? Now dat's what I wants to know."

"Well, I think you're here, plain enough, but I think you're a tangle-headed old fool, Jim."

"I is, is I? Well you answer me dis. Didn't you tote out de line in de canoe, fer to make fas' to de tow-head?"

"No, I didn't. What tow-head? I hain't seen no tow-head."

"You hain't seen no tow-head? Looky here—didn't de line pull loose en de raf' go a hummin' down de river, en leave you en de canoe behine in de fog?"

"What fog?"

"Why *de* fog. De fog dat's ben aroun' all night. En didn't you whoop, en didn't I whoop, tell we got mix' up in de islands en one un us got los' en 'tother one was jis' as good as los', 'kase he didn' know whah he wuz? En didn't I bust up agin a lot er dem islands en have a turrible time en mos' git drownded? Now ain' dat so, boss—ain't it so? You answer me dat."

"Well, this is too many for me, Jim. I hain't seen no fog, nor no islands, nor no troubles, nor nothing. I been setting here talking with you all night till you went to sleep about ten minutes ago, and I reckon I done the same. You couldn't a got drunk in that time, so of course you've been dreaming."

“Dad fetch it, how is I gwyne to dream all dat in ten minutes?”

“Well, hang it all, you did dream it, because there didn’t any of it happen.”

“But Huck, it’s all jis’ as plain to me as——”

“It don’t make no difference how plain it is, there ain’t nothing in it. I know, because I’ve been here all the time.”

Jim didn’t say nothing for about five minutes, but set there studying over it. Then he says:

“Well, den, I reck’n I did dream it, Huck; but dog my cats ef it ain’t de powerfulest dream I ever see. En I hain’t ever had no dream b’fo’ dat’s tired me like dis one.”

“Oh, well, that’s all right, because a dream does tire a body like everything, sometimes. But this one was a staving dream—tell me all about it, Jim.”

So Jim went to work and told me the whole thing right through, just as it happened, only he painted it up considerable. Then he said he must start in and “terpret” it, because it was sent for a warning. He said the first tow-head stood for a man that would try to do us some good, but the current was another man that would get us away from him. The whoops was warnings that would come to us every now and then, and if we didn’t try hard to make out to understand them they’d just take us into bad luck, ’stead of keeping us out of it. The lot of tow-heads was troubles we was going to get into with quarrelsome people and

all kinds of mean folks, but if we minded our business and didn't talk back and aggravate them, we would pull through and get out of the fog and into the big clear river, which was the free States, and wouldn't have no more trouble.

It had clouded up pretty dark just after I got onto the raft, but it was clearing up again, now.

"Oh, well, that's all interpreted well enough, as far as it goes, Jim," I says; "but what does *these* things stand for?"

It was the leaves and rubbish on the raft, and the smashed oar. You could see them first rate, now.

Jim looked at the trash, and then looked at me, and back at the trash again. He had got the dream fixed so strong in his head that he couldn't seem to shake it loose and get the facts back into its place again, right away. But when he did get the thing straightened around, he looked at me steady, without ever smiling, and says:

"What do dey stan' for? I's gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I wake up en fine you back agin', all safe en soun', de tears come en I could a got down on my knees en kiss' yo' foot I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash*; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed."

Then he got up slow, and walked to the wigwam, and went in there, without saying anything but that. But that was enough. It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed *his* foot to get him to take it back.

It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger—but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd a knowed it would make him feel that way.

Chapter 15

Nog drie nagte, so't ons gereken, en dan kan ons by ons mikpunt aankom—dit wil sê Cairo, aan die onderpunt van Illinois, net waar die Ohiorivier invloei. Daar sou ons die vlot verkoop, op 'n stoomboot klim en tot bo in die Ohio opvaar, tussen die vrye state in waar ons moeilikhede op 'n end sou wees.

Nou ja, die tweede nag begin daar toe 'n mis opkom en ons maak aanstalte om teen 'n slonsbank vas te meer, want so in 'n mis kon mens tog nie ry nie. Maar toe ek in die kano vooruit roei met die tou om dit iewers vas te bind, toe's daar net dun jong lootjies op die slonsbank. Ek het die tou tog maar vasgeknop om een van dié stengels wat reg teen die waterkant gegroei het, maar wat: die vlot het met so 'n vaart in die sterk stroom verbygekom, dat hy die boompie met wortel en tak uitgepluk het—en daar trék hulle. Ek kon sien hoe die mis om my toesak en dit het my so siek en bang laat voel dat ek ampers 'n halfminuut lank nie 'n lid kon verroer nie—en toe was daar niks meer van die vlot te sien nie. Toe wip ek in die kano in, storm na die stertkant, gryp die spaantjie en gee 'n lang haal agter- uit. Maar die kano roer nie: ek was so haastig dat ek skoon vergeet het om hom weer los te maak. Ek is dus weer op en ek probeer die tou losknop, maar my hande is so bewerig dat ek amper niks uitge- rig kry nie.

Sodra ek weer aan die gang kan kom, sit ek die vlot agterna, koersagtig al langs die slonsbank af. Dit was alles goed en wel die eerste entjie, maar die slonsbank was skaars sestig tree lank en die oomblik toe ek dáár verby kom, toe skiet ek reg in die vaste wit misbank in. Van koers en rigting kon ek verder g'n kop of stert uit- maak nie.

Kyk, besluit ek, om te roei gaan niks help nie: voor ek my kom kry, beland ek teen die wal of teen 'n slonsbank. Ek hou my dus maar liewer doodstil en gee maar lyf met die afdrywery—al kan julle my glo, dis 'n gesukkel om op 'n tyd soos daardie mense se hande stil te hou. Ek het 'n slag

uit voile bors geskreeu en my ore gespits. Doer in die iewer-van-niewers hoor ek 'n dowwe roepgeluidjie antwoord gee. My hart begin weer klop. Soos 'n mal ding pyl ek in die rigting en hou heelyd my ore gespits om dit weer te hoor. En toe dit weer 'n slag opklink, gewaar ek dat ek glad nie in die regte koers roei nie, maar skoon regs verby. Die volgende keer is ek weer te ver links—en veel veld wen ek ook nie, want ek ja al in die rondte, diékant toe en daaikant toe, terwyl die ander ou stryk reguit hou. As die simpele vent nou maar net daaraan wou dink om op 'n blikpan te slaan, en *aan te hou* slaan, maar dit doen hy nie, en dis daardie stil tye tussen die roepe deur wat my penarie al groter maak. Maar nou ja, ek worstel maar voort en skielik hoor ek die roep *agter* my. Nou was ek behoorlik in 'n moles, want dit was of iemand anders se roep, of ek het my rigting skoon kwytingeraak.

Toe gooi ek my spaan neer. Weer hoor ek die roep—nog altyd agter my, maar nou op 'n ander plek; dit bly ál agternakom, en mik die een oomblik diékant toe, dan weer soontoe, en ek gee maar slag vir slag antwoord, totdat dit na 'n ruk weer vóór my is. Toe weet ek die stroom het nou weer my kano se punt stroom-af geswaai en ek is nog op stryk—dit wil sê as dit wél Jim se geskreeu is en nie 'n ander roeier s'n nie. Van stemme kon ek daar in die mis niks uitmaak nie, want in so 'n mis klink en lyk alles mos anders.

Die roepery hou maar aan. Na sowat 'n minuut swiep ek verby 'n regaf oewer met die rokerige spookgedaantes van groot bome daar- op; net toe smyt die stroom my linksweg uit en skiet by my verby met 'n klomp stompe en opdrifsels wat behoorlik dreun soos hulle verby- kom, so vinnig gaan dit. Nog 'n sekonde of twee, en toe's alles weer doodwit en stil. Ek bly roerloos sit en luister na my hart se geklop, en ek skat ek het nie 'n enkele keer asemgehaal in 'n hele honderd kloppe nie.

Toe laat ek alle hoop vaar. Ek het geweet wat gebeur het. Daardie regaf oewer waar ek verbygekom het, was 'n eiland, en Jim het aan die ander kant verbygedrywe. Dit was nooit 'n slonsbank waar mens in tien minute kon verbydrywe nie: dit was ruig begroei met die bome en bosse van 'n beoorlike eiland—en vir al wat mens weet, kon dit vyf of ses myl lank wees en meer as 'n halfmyl breed.

So 'n vyftien minute lank, skat ek, het ek doodstil bly sit, my ore fyn gespits. Ek was natuurlik nog altyd aan die afdryf, so teen vier, vyf myl per uur, al sou mens dit nooit dink nie. Dit *voel* mos vir mens of jy doodstil daar op die water lê; en as jy so 'n effensie glimpie kry van 'n stomp hout wat verbyglip, besef jy nooit hoe vinnig jy self dryf nie; jy trek net jou asem in en dink: Goeiste, maar daardie stomp trek vir jou *vinnig*! En as julle miskien dink dis nie eensaam en verlate en ellendig so stoksielallenig in die mis in die nag nie—gaan probeer dit net 'n slag, dán sal julle sien.

Die volgende halfuur het ek weer af en toe 'n skree gegee; uiteinde- lik hoor ek dowwerig in die verte 'n antwoord en probeer dit agterna- sit, maar nee wat; want toe beland ek mos tussen 'n hele norring slonsbanke. Ek kon hulle vaagweg weerskante van my gewaar, party- keers met net 'n smal

slootjie tussen hulle deur; en van die wat ek glad nie in die mis kon sien nie, het ek nogtans gewéét, want ek kon hoor hoe klots die water teen die oudoosie struikgewas en gemors wat oor die kante afhang. Dit het ook glad nie lank geduur nie, of ek het die uitroep skoon daar tussen die slonsbanke verloor; buite—dien het ek net ’n kort rukkie probeer om hulle agterna te sit, want mens kon ewe goed probeer om ’n spooklik te vang. Ek weet van g’n ander geluid wat my nog ooit só kon pypkan of so vinnig rond en bont kon spring nie.

Vier of vyf keer moes ek blitsig wegswenk van die wal af, anders het ek daardie eilandjies sowaar los uit die rivier uit gestamp. Dit het my laat dink dat die vlot dalk ook aanhou vasdryf teen die wal, anders sou dit verder van my af wegom en in ’n jagtrap te ver wees om gehoor te word—want die het so ’n raps vinniger as ek oor die weg gekom.

Na so ’n ruk het dit begin lyk of ek darem nou weer op oop water is, maar van ’n roep was daar g’n geluid meer nie. Dalk het Jim teen ’n stomp vasgedryf en sy moses teëgekrom, het ek gedink. Ek self was poegaai, dus het ek maar plat in die kano gaan lê en besluit ek traak nou nie meer nie. Ek *wou natuurlik* nie aan die slaap raak nie, maar ek was so vaak dat ek dit net nie kon help nie; toe besluit ek om maar net ’n vinnige dutjie te vang.

Maar dit was seker meer as ’n kort dutjie, want toe ek wakker word, is die sterre ewe helder aan die skyn en die mis is skoonveld en ek is besig om stertkant eerste om ’n wye draai te dobber. Eers het ek glad nie geweet wáár ek is nie en gedink ek is aan die droom; en toe die waarheid wel begin terugsyfer, toe’s dit asof dit daar uit laasweek se dowwe vertes uit kom.

Die rivier was verduiwels groot hier en die bosse weerskant het hoog en dig gestaan; in die sterlig het dit eenvoudig na ’n soliede muur gelyk. Toe kyk ek stroom-af en gewaar ’n klein spikkeltjie op die water. Dadelik kry ek koers soontoe, maar toe ek daar kom, is dit net ’n paar oudsaagbalke wat aan mekaar vasgebind is. Toe gewaar ek nóg ’n spikkel en ek sit dit agterna. En toe nóg ene, en dié keer was dit reg. Dit was die vlot.

Jim het daar met sy kop tussen sy knieë gesit, vas aan die slaap, met sy regterarm oor die stuurspaan geslaan. Die ander spaan het afgebreek en die vlot was besmeer van blare en takke en gemors. Hy het dus ook maar ’n opdraande tydjie agter die rug gehad.

Ek het die kano haastig vasmag, reg onder Jim se neus op die vlot gaan lê, en toe begin gaap en my vuiste tot teen hom uitgestrek.

„Hallo, Jim,” sê ek luiters. „Het ek dan geslaap? Hoekom het jy my nie wakker gemaak nie?”

„My hemel-tog, issit jy, Huck? En jy’sie dood nie? Jy’sie geversuip nie? Jy’s weer trug? Dis te goed om waar te wees, my goeie, dis net te goed om waar te wees. Lat ek jou ’n slag goed bekyk, jong, lat ek aan jou vat. Nee sowaar, jy’sie dood nie! Jy’s weer hier, spring—lewendig, dieselle oudHuck van altyd—net dieselle oudHuck, dankie—vader tog!”

„Maar wat makeer jou nou, Jim? Het jy gedrink?”

„Gedrink? Het ék gedrink? Het ek miskien ’n kans gehad om te loop en staan en drink?”

„Nou vir wat praat jy dan so hoog deur die takke?”

„Hoe praat ek hoog deur’ie takke?”

„*Hoe?* Maar jy hou aan te kere gaan dat ek teruggekom het. Mens sou sweer ek was weg!”

„Huck—Huck Finn, kyk my nou mooi innie oge. Kyk my innie oge. Was jy miskien *nie* weg nie?”

„Weg? Maar wat op dees aarde bedoel jy? *Ek* was nooit nêrens nie. Waantoe sou ek miskien gegaan het?”

„Nou kyk hier, baas, daa’s fout iewers. Daa’s fout. Is ek *ek*—of wie is ek? Is ek hierso, of waar is ek? Dis wat ek wil weet.”

„Ek dink jy’s hier. Mens kan dit mos sien. Maar ek dink jy’t ’n slag van die windmeul weg, ou Jim.”

„Ek hét, het ek? Nou sê jy nou vir my: hê jy miskien *nie* met die kano vooruit gery om die lyn op die slonsbank te loop vasmaak nie?”

„Natuurlik het ek nie. Watter slonsbank? *Ek* het g’n slonsbank gesien nie.”

„Jy’t g’n slonsbank gesien nie? Nee jong, hu-ú. Wat vannie lyn wat losgetrek het en die vlot wat afgedryf het en jy wat daar innie kano innie mis agtergebly het?”

„Wat se mis?”

„Die *mis*, man. Die mis wat heelnag hier op die rivier gelê het. En jy’t geskrou en ek het geskrou, en toe raak ons deurmekaar daar met die eilanne saam, ennie een verdwaal ennie anner een is so goed soos verdwaal want hy weet g’n waar hy is nie. En toe dons ek ál in die eilanne in en als loop deurmekaar en ek versuip nog ampertjies boonop. Wil jy nou vir my sê dit wassie so nie, he? Antwoord my nou.”

„Nee, ek weet nie, Jim. Dis my skoon oor. Ek het g’n mis gesien nie, g’n eilande nie, g’n moeilikhede nie, niks. Ek het heelnag hier met jou gesit en gesels tot jy tien minute gelede aan die slaap geraak het. Toe’t ek ook seker ingedut. Jy kon nie in dié tydjie dronk ge- word het nie, dus het jy seker maar gedroom.”

„Gu! En hoe dink jy kon ek al daai dinge in tien minute ytgedroom het?”

„Maar jy hét dit gedroom, Jim, want niks daarvan het gebeur nie.”

„Maar Huck, dis vir my so heller soos . . .”

„Dit traak my nie hoe helder dit was nie. Dis alles twak. Ek weet, want ek was heeltyd hier.”

Omtrent vyf minute lank sê Jim nie boe af ba nie; hy sit net die ding en bedink. Dan sê hy: „Nou ja, dan’t ek dit maar seker gedroom, Huck. Maar ek sweer jou ek het in my lewensdag nog nie so ’n dydlike droom gehad nie. En ek het nog nooit g’n droom gehad wat my so moeg gemaak het nie.”

„O dís orraait. ’n Droom maak mens partykeer net so moeg soos enigiets anders. Maar dié een klink sommer na ’n bielie van ’n droom. Vertel my

bietjie daarvan, Jim.”

Toe val Jim weg en hy vertel my die hele gedoente van begin tot end nes dit gebeur het. Net, hy las heelwat by. Toe besluit hy hy moet die ding beginne uitlê ook, want dis dan kwansuis as ’n waar- skuwing na horn gestuur. Die eerste slonsbank, besluit hy, staan vir iemand wat gaan probeer om iets goeds vir ons te doen, maar die stroom is ’n ander man wat ons van hom af sal wegneem. Die skreeue is waarskuwings wat ons elke af en toe gaan kry; en as ons nie ons bes gaan doen om hulle te verstaan nie, dan gaan hulle ons in die sop laat beland in plaas van ons daaruit te hou. Die spul slonsbanke is moeilikhede wat ons op die lyf gaan loop met skoor- soekerige vente en allerhande onderduimse mense; maar as ons ons neuse uit ander se sake hou en nie teëpraat en die mense omkrap nie, dan sal ons wel anderkant die mis uitkom en op die groot oop rivier beland—dit wil sê in die vry state waar ons moeilikhede op ’n end sal wees.

Ná ek op die vlot teruggeklouter het, het die wolke taamlik donker begin opsteek, maar nou was dit weer aan die ooptrek.

„Nou ja, Jim,” sê ek, „dit klink alles goed en wel soos jy dit uitlê, maar wat beteken dié goed nou?” En ek wys na die blare en die gemors op die vlot, en na die gebreekte spaan; dis nou alles duidelik sigbaar.

Jim kyk na die gemors, dan weer na my, dan weer na die gemors. Dis asof hy horn die droom nou só sterk ingeprent het dat hy nie weer daarvan ontslae kan raak en die feite in die gesig kan staar nie. Maar toe hy oplaas weer mooi snap wat daar gebeur het, kyk hy my vas in die oë en sonder die kleinste glimlaggie sê hy:

„Wat beteken die goeters, vra jy? Ek sal jou vertel. Toe ek hele- maal gedaan was van spartel en van roep na jou, toe’t ek kom slaap, en my hart was flenters oor jy weggeraak het. En ek het nie meer ge- traak wat verder van my en die vlot wore nie. En toe ek wakker skrik en ek sien jou so springlewendig trug, toe voel ek die trane kom; en ek kon net daar op my kniege geval en jou voet gesoen het, so bly was ek. En jý? Al wat jý aan gedink het, was hoe jy ou Jim vir die gek kan hou, en dit met te lieg. Die goeters daar is *gemors*. En weet jy wat’s ook gemors? Die mense wat vuilgoed op hulle vrinne se koppe gooi en hulle skaam maak.”

Toe staan hy stadig op en loop na die tentjie toe, en gaan in sonder om ’n woord te sê. Maar dit was ook genoeg. Dit het my so agterbaks laat voel dat ek amper jy voete sou gesoen het as hy net sy woorde sou terugtrek.

Dit het vyftien minute geduur voor ek sover kon kom om my voor ’n neger te loop verneder. Maar ek het dit *gedoen*. En ek was nog nooit spyt daaroor agterná nie. Ek het nooit weer gek geskeer met hom nie. En ek sou dit die slag ook nie gedoen het as ek geweet het hy sou só daarvoor voel nie.

SECTION 16

We slept most all day, and started out at night, a little ways behind a monstrous long raft that was as long going by as a procession. She had four long sweeps at each end, so we judged she carried as many as thirty men, likely. She had five big wigwams aboard, wide apart, and an open camp fire in the middle, and a tall flag-pole at each end. There was a power of style about her. It *amounted* to something being a raftsmen on such a craft as that.

We went drifting down into a big bend, and the night clouded up and got hot. The river was very wide, and was walled with solid timber on both sides; you couldn't see a break in it hardly ever, or a light. We talked about Cairo, and wondered whether we would know it when we got to it. I said likely we wouldn't, because I had heard say there warn't but about a dozen houses there, and if they didn't happen to have them lit up, how was we going to know we was passing a town? Jim said if the two big rivers joined together there, that would show. But I said maybe we might think we was passing the foot of an island and coming into the same old river again. That disturbed Jim—and me too. So the question was, what to do? I said, paddle ashore the first time a light showed, and tell them pap was behind, coming along with a trading-scow, and was a green hand at the business, and wanted to know how far it was to Cairo. Jim thought it was a good idea, so we took a smoke on it and waited.¹⁵

There warn't nothing to do, now, but to look out sharp for the town, and not pass it without seeing it. He said he'd be mighty sure to see it, because he'd be a free man the minute he seen it, but if he missed it he'd be in the slave country again and no more show for freedom. Every little while he jumps up and says:

“Dah she is!”

But it warn't. It was Jack-o-lanterns, or lightning-bugs; so he set down again, and went to watching, same as before. Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom. Well, I can tell you it made me all over trembly and feverish, too, to hear him, because I begun to get it through my head that he *was* most free—and who was to blame for it? Why, *me*. I couldn't get that out of my conscience^{e1}, no how nor no way. It got to troubling me so I couldn't rest; I couldn't stay still in one place. It hadn't ever come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did; and it staid with me, and scorched me more and more. I tried to make out to myself that I warn't to blame, because I didn't run Jim off from his rightful owner; but it warn't no use, conscience up and says, every time, “But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you could a paddled ashore and told somebody.” That was so—I couldn't get around that, noway. That was where it pinched. Conscience says to me, “What had poor Miss Watson done to you, that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word? What did that poor old woman do to you, that you could treat her so mean? Why, she tried to learn you your book, she tried to learn you your manners, she tried to be good to you every way she knowed

how. *That's* what she done."

I got to feeling so mean and so miserable I most wished I was dead. I fidgeted up and down the raft, abusing myself to myself, and Jim was fidgeting up and down past me. We neither of us could keep still. Every time he danced around and says, "Dah's Cairo!" it went through me like a shot, and I thought if it *was* Cairo I reckoned I would die of miserableness.

Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to myself. He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Ab'litionist to go and steal them.

It most froze me to hear such talk. He wouldn't ever dared to talk such talk in his life before. Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free. It was according to the old saying, "give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell."^{e2} Thinks I, this is what comes of my not thinking. Here was this nigger which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children—children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm.

I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of him. My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, "Let up on me—it ain't too late, yet—I'll paddle ashore at the first light, and tell." I

felt easy, and happy, and light as a feather, right off. All my troubles was gone. I went to looking out sharp for a light, and sort of singing to myself. By-and-by one showed. Jim sings out:

“We’s safe, Huck, we’s safe! Jump up and crack yo’ heels, dat’s de good ole Cairo at las’, I jis knows it!”

I says:

“I’ll take the canoe and go see, Jim. It mightn’t be, you know.”

He jumped and got the canoe ready, and put his old coat in the bottom for me to set on, and give me the paddle; and as I shoved off, he says:

“Pooty soon I’ll be a-shout’n for joy, en I’ll say, it’s all on accounts o’ Huck; I’s a free man, en I couldn’t ever ben free ef it hadn’ ben for Huck; Huck done it. Jim won’t ever forgit you, Huck; you’s de bes’ fren’ Jim’s ever had; en you’s de *only* fren’ ole Jim’s got now.”

I was paddling off, all in a sweat to tell on him; but when he says this, it seemed to kind of take the tuck all out of me. I went along slow then, and I warn’t right down certain whether I was glad I started or whether I warn’t. When I was fifty yards off, Jim says:

“Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on’y white genlman dat ever kep’ his promise to ole Jim.”

Well, I just felt sick. But I says, I *got* to do it—I can’t get *out* of it. Right then, along comes a skiff with two men in it, with guns, and they stopped and I stopped. One of them says:

“What’s that, yonder?”

“A piece of a raft,” I says.

“Do you belong on it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Any men on it?”

“Only one, sir.”

“Well, there’s five niggers run off to-night, up yonder above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black?”

I didn’t answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words wouldn’t come. I tried, for a second or two, to brace up and out with it, but I warn’t man enough—hadn’t the spunk of a rabbit. I see I was weakening; so I just give up trying, and up and says—

“He’s white.”

“I reckon we’ll go and see for ourselves.”

“I wish you would,” says I, “because it’s pap that’s there, and maybe you’d help me tow the raft ashore where the light is. He’s sick—and so is mam and Mary Ann.”

“Oh, the devil! we’re in a hurry, boy. But I s’pose we’ve got to. Come—buckle to your paddle, and let’s get along.”

I buckled to my paddle and they laid to their oars. When we had made a stroke or two, I says:

“Pap’ll be mighty much obleeged to you, I can tell you. Everybody goes away when I want them to help me tow the raft ashore, and I can’t do it by myself.”

“Well, that’s infernal mean. Odd, too. Say, boy, what’s the matter with your father?”

“It’s the—a—the—well, it ain’t anything, much.”

They stopped pulling. It warn’t but a mighty little ways to the raft, now. One says:

“Boy, that’s a lie. What *is* the matter with your pap? Answer up square, now, and it’ll be the better for you.”

“I will, sir, I will, honest—but don’t leave us, please. It’s the—the—gentlemen, if you’ll only pull ahead, and let me heave you the head-line, you won’t have to come a-near the raft—please do.”

“Set her back, John, set her back!” says one. They backed water. “Keep away, boy—keep to looard^{e3}. Confound it, I just expect the wind has blowed it to us. Your pap’s got the small-pox, and you know it precious well. Why didn’t you come out and say so? Do you want to spread it all over?”

“Well,” says I, a-blubbering, “I’ve told everybody before, and then they just went away and left us.”

“Poor devil, there’s something in that. We are right down sorry for you, but we—well, hang it, we don’t want the small-pox, you see. Look here, I’ll tell you what to do. Don’t you try to land by yourself, or you’ll smash everything to pieces. You float along down about twenty miles and you’ll come to a town on the

left-hand side of the river. It will be long after sun-up, then, and when you ask for help, you tell them your folks are all down with chills and fever. Don't be a fool again, and let people guess what is the matter. Now we're trying to do you a kindness; so you just put twenty miles between us, that's a good boy. It wouldn't do any good to land yonder where the light is—it's only a wood-yard. Say—I reckon your father's poor, and I'm bound to say he's in pretty hard luck. Here—I'll put a twenty dollar gold piece^{e4} on this board, and you get it when it floats by. I feel mighty mean to leave you, but my kingdom! it won't do to fool with small-pox, don't you see?"

"Hold on, Parker," says the other man, "here's a twenty to put on the board for me. Good-bye, boy, you do as Mr. Parker told you, and you'll be all right."

"That's so, my boy—good-bye, good-bye. If you see any runaway niggers, you get help and nab them, and you can make some money by it."

"Good-bye, sir," says I, "I won't let no runaway niggers get by me if I can help it."

They went off, and I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I see it warn't no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body that don't get *started* right when he's little, ain't got no show—when the pinch comes there ain't nothing to back him up and keep him to his work, and so he gets beat. Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on,—s'pose you'd a done right and give Jim up; would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad—I'd feel just the

same way I do now. Well, then, says I, what's the use you learning to do right, when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was struck. I couldn't answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn't bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever come handiest at the time.

I went into the wigwam; Jim warn't there. I looked all around; he warn't anywhere. I says:

"Jim!"

"Here I is, Huck. Is dey out o' sight yit? Don't talk loud."

He was in the river, under the stern oar, with just his nose out. I told him they was out of sight, so he come aboard. He says:

"I was a-listenin' to all de talk, en I slips into de river en was gwyne to shove for sho' if dey come aboard. Den I was gwyne to swim to de raf' agin when dey was gone. But lawsy, how you did fool 'em, Huck! Dat *wuz* de smartes' dodge! I tell you, chile, I 'speck it save' ole Jim—ole Jim ain't gwyne to forgit you for dat, honey."

Then we talked about the money. It was a pretty good raise, twenty dollars apiece. Jim said we could take deck passage on a steamboat now, and the money would last us as far as we wanted to go in the free States. He said twenty mile more warn't far for the raft to go, but he wished we was already there.

Towards daybreak we tied up, and Jim was mighty particular about hiding the raft good. Then he worked all day fixing things in bundles, and getting all ready to quit rafting.

That night about ten we hove in sight of the lights of a town away down in a left-hand bend.

I went off in the canoe, to ask about it. Pretty soon I found a man out in the river with a skiff, setting a trot-line. I ranged up and says:

“Mister, is that town Cairo?”

“Cairo? no. You must be a blame’ fool.”

“What town is it, mister?”

“If you want to know, go and find out. If you stay here botherin’ around me for about a half a minute longer, you’ll get something you won’t want.”

I paddled to the raft. Jim was awful disappointed, but I said never mind, Cairo would be the next place, I reckoned.

We passed another town before daylight, and I was going out again; but it was high ground, so I didn’t go. No high ground about Cairo, Jim said. I had forgot it. We laid up for the day, on a tow-head tolerable close to the left-hand bank. I begun to suspicion something. So did Jim. I says:

“Maybe we went by Cairo in the fog that night.”

He says:

“Doan’ less’ talk about it, Huck. Po’ niggers can’t have no luck. I awluz ’spected dat rattle-snake skin warn’t done wid it’s work.”

“I wish I’d never seen that snake-skin, Jim—I do wish

I'd never laid eyes on it."

"It ain't yo' fault, Huck; you didn' know. Don't you blame yo'self 'bout it."

When it was daylight, here was the clear Ohio water^{e5} in shore, sure enough, and outside was the old regular Muddy!¹⁶ So it was all up with Cairo.

We talked it all over. It wouldn't do to take to the shore; we couldn't take the raft up the stream, of course. There warn't no way but to wait for dark, and start back in the canoe and take the chances. So we slept all day amongst the cotton-wood thicket, so as to be fresh for the work, and when we went back to the raft about dark the canoe was gone!

We didn't say a word for a good while. There warn't anything to say. We both knowed well enough it was some more work of the rattle-snake skin; so what was the use to talk about it? It would only look like we was finding fault, and that would be bound to fetch more bad luck—and keep on fetching it, too, till we knowed enough to keep still.

By-and-by we talked about what we better do, and found there warn't no way but just to go along down with the raft till we got a chance to buy a canoe to go back in. We warn't going to borrow it when there warn't anybody around, the way pap would do, for that might set people after us.

So we shoved out, after dark, on the raft.

Anybody that don't believe yet, that it's foolishness to handle a snake-skin, after all that that snake-skin done

for us, will believe it now, if they read on and see what more it done for us.

The place to buy canoes is off of rafts laying up at shore. But we didn't see no rafts laying up; so we went along during three hours and more. Well, the night got gray, and ruther thick, which is the next meanest thing to fog. You can't tell the shape of the river, and you can't see no distance. It got to be very late and still, and then along comes a steamboat up the river. We lit the lantern, and judged she would see it. Upstream boats didn't generly come close to us; they go out and follow the bars and hunt for easy water^{e6} under the reefs; but nights like this they bull right up the channel against the whole river.

We could hear her pounding along, but we didn't see her good till she was close. She aimed right for us. Often they do that and try to see how close they can come without touching; sometimes the wheel bites off a sweep, and then the pilot sticks his head out and laughs, and thinks he's mighty smart. Well, here she comes, and we said she was going to try to shave us; but she didn't seem to be sheering off a bit. She was a big one, and she was coming in a hurry, too, looking like a black cloud with rows of glow-worms around it; but all of a sudden she bulged out, big and scary, with a long row of wide-open furnace doors shining like red-hot teeth, and her monstrous bows and guards hanging right over us. There was a yell at us, and a jingling of bells to stop the engines, a pow-wow of cussing, and whistling of steam—and as Jim went overboard on one side and I on the other, she come smashing straight through the raft^{e7.17}

I dived—and I aimed to find the bottom, too, for a thirty-foot wheel had got to go over me, and I wanted it to have plenty of room. I could always stay under water a minute; this time I reckon I staid under water a minute and a half. Then I bounced for the top in a hurry, for I was nearly busting. I popped out to my arm-pits and blowed the water out of my nose, and puffed a bit. Of course there was a booming current; and of course that boat started her engines again ten seconds after she stopped them, for they never cared much for raftsmen; so now she was churning along up the river, out of sight in the thick weather, though I could hear her.

I sung out for Jim about a dozen times, but I didn't get any answer; so I grabbed a plank that touched me while I was "treading water," and struck out for shore, shoving it ahead of me. But I made out to see that the drift of the current was towards the left-hand shore, which meant that I was in a crossing; so I changed off and went that way.

It was one of these long, slanting, two-mile crossings; so I was a good long time in getting over. I made a safe landing, and clum up the bank. I couldn't see but a little ways, but I went poking along over rough ground for a quarter of a mile or more, and then I run across a big old-fashioned double log house before I noticed it. I was going to rush by and get away, but a lot of dogs jumped out and went to howling and barking at me, and I knowed better than to move another peg.

Chapter 16

Ons het amper die hele dag deur geslaap en eers teen die aand weer koers gekry, kort agter 'n allemagtige lang vlot wat soos 'n nimmereindigende prosessie by ons verbygevaar gekom het. Daar was vier lang spane aan elke punt, sodat ons geskat het daar kon maklik dertig manne aan boord wees. Bo-op was daar vyf groot tente, ver uitmekaar, met 'n oop kampvuur in die middel en 'n lang vlagpaal aan elke punt. Dit was nou sommer 'n bak vlot. As 'n man op só 'n vaartuig roeier was, dan't dit darem iets *beteken*.

Ons het tydsam om 'n groot bog begin dryf net toe die nag begin betrokke en warm raak. Die rivier was baie breed, met digte boom- mure alkant waardeur mens byna nooit 'n ylerigheidjie of 'n lig kon sien opduik nie. Ons het oor Cairo sit en praat en gewonder of ons dit nou juis sou herken wanneer ons daar aanland. Ek self het gedink ons sou nie, want ek het al gehoor hulle sê daar's skaars 'n dosyn huise in die plek—en as daar dalk net nie lig in hulle brand nie, sou ons mos nooit eers weet ons gaan by 'n dorp verby nie. Jim het gesê ons kan dit nie mis nie, want die twee groot riviere loop dan daar inmekaar. Maar ek wou nie kopgee nie: dalk lyk dit vir ons net of ons die onderpunt van 'n eiland verbystek en dan land ons maar weer in dieselfde ou rivier. Dit het Jim bietjie onrustig gemaak—en vir my ook. Die vraag was dus: wat moet ons doen ? Steek wal toe nes ons die eerste lig sien, sê ek, en sê vir die mense daar dat Pa agterna kom met 'n smousskuit, en hy ken die wêreld nie juis nie en hy wil weet hoe ver is dit nog Cairo toe. Die plan het Jim ook aange- staan. Dus het ons dit beklank met 'n lekker lang rook en bly sit en wag.

Al wat daar nou te doene was, was om ons oë oop te hou sodat ons nie dalk by die dorp verbytrek sonder om dit te sien nie. Jim was daar vas oortuig van dat hy dit sou raaksien, want hy sou mos 'n vry man wees die oomblik as hy dit gewaar; maar as hy dit miskyk, bly hy maar in die kontrei waar die mense nog slawe aanhou.

Elke kort-kort spring hy dus op en skree: „Daar'sy!”

Maar dit was nie: dit was spookliggies of vuurvlieë. En dan moes hy maar mooi-tjies weer kom sit en van vooraf dophou. Jim het skoon koorserig en bewurig gevoel oor sy vryheid wat so naby was, so't hy gesê. En julle kan my maar glo: dit het my ook skoon koors en bewerasie gegee net om na horn te luister. Want ek begin toe mos daaraan dink dat Jim rêrig al so hittete vry was. En wie se skuld was dit? *Myne*. Ek kon die ding net nie uit my gewete wegkry nie. Dit het my so begin pla dat ek g'n rus of duurte kon kry nie; ek kon net nie bly stilsit nie. Tevore het ek nog nooit behoorlik gedink aan wat ek juis besig was om aan te vang nie. Maar nou hét dit, en dit het al meer en meer begin skroei in my. Ek het myself probeer wysmaak dat dit tog g'n my skuld was nie: dit was tog nie ek wat Jim gehelp het om weg te hoi van sy regmatige

eienaar af nie. Maar nee wat: elke slag wip my gewete weer op en sê: „Maar jy't mos geweet hy hol weg om vry te word. Jy kon maklik wal toe geroei het en iemand daarvan vertel het.” En dit was die pure waarheid, dáár kon ek tog nie verby- kom nie. Dis hoekom die ding so bly lol het. Want my gewete het aanhou sê: „Wat het juffrou Watson jou aangedoen dat jy maar toe- sien hoe haar slaaf weghol en jy sê g'n dooie woord nie? Wat het daardie ou vrou vir jou gedoen dat jy haar so agterbaks behandel? Sy't jou jou boek probeer leer; sy't vir jou maniere probeer leer; sy't jou so goed behandel as wat sy maar kon. *Dis* wat sy gedoen het, ja.”

Naderhand het ek so vrot en gemeen begin voel dat ek amper gewens het ek was maar liewer dood. Ek het heen en weer bly karring oor die vlot en myself die hele tyd loop en uitskel; en Jim was net so krielwelrig hier langs my. Nie een van ons twee kon tot rus kom nie. Elke slag as hy opwip en roep: „Daar's Cairo!” dan's dit of 'n geweerskoot my tref. As dit die slag rêrig Cairo was, so't ek gedink, dan sou ek sowaar doodgaan van skone ellendigheid.

Al die tyd wat ek daar met myself geloop en redekawel het, het Jim hardop gesit en praat. Hy't gepraat oor wat hy die heel eerste sou doen as hy in 'n vry provinsie aankom: hy sou begin geld spaar en g'n enkele sent uitgee nie, tot hy genoeg het om sy vrou los te koop. Dié was 'n slavin op 'n plaas naby juffrou Watson se huis. Dan sou hulle altwee saam begin werk en hulle twee kinders loskoop, en as die kinders se baas nie wou verkoop nie, sou hulle 'n Afskaffer kry om hulle te loop wegstéél daar.

Dié praatjies het my skoon lam laat voel. Jim sou dit nooit tevore in sy lewe gewaag het om só te praat nie. Kyk nou net watter verskil dit aan hom maak, nou dat hy ampertjies vry is! Die ou spreekwoord sê mos: *Gee 'n neger 'n duim en hy vat 'n el*. En ek dog by myself: dit kom daarvan dat ek nie my kop gebruik het nie. Hier sit die slaaf wat ek as't ware help wegkom het, en hy sê sonder blik of bloos hy gaan sy kinders steel—kinders wat behoort aan 'n man wat ek nie eers ken nie en wat my nog nooit kwaad aangedoen het nie.

Ek het spyt gevoel oor die praatjies van Jim; dit het horn so half in my oë laat daal. En my gewete het my al hoe meer opgekeil—totdat ek op die ou end teëpraat: „Gee my kans,” sê ek. „Dis nog nie te laat nie. Ek sal wal toe roei en gaan sê.” En sommer so handomkeer voel ek toe lekker en gelukkig en so lig soos 'n veertjie. Al my sorge was vort. Ek begin die wal met stip oë dophou vir 'n liggie terwyl ek so half binnensmonds sit en neurie. Na 'n rukkie is daar ook een.

„Ons is gered, Huck!” roep Jim. „Op met jou en klap jou hakke— daar's die lekker ou Cairo eindelik. Ek weet dit, o ja, ek weet dit!”

„Ek sal die kano vat en gaan kyk, Jim,” sê ek. „Dalk is dit nie Cairo nie.”

Hy spring van die vlot af en maak die kano gereed, en gooi sy ou jas op die bodem sodat ek daarop kan sit, en hy gee my die spaan. Toe, met die wegtrek, roep hy agterna:

„Sommer nou-noutjies kan ek skrou van blytskap. En dis alles net oor

Huck, sal ek sê. Ek's 'n vry man—en sonner Huck sou ek nooit vry gewóre het nie. Dis Huck se doen dié. Jim sal jou nooit vergeet nie, Huck. Jy'sie beste vrind wat ou Jim nog ooit gehad het. En jy's die alste, enigste vrind wat ou Jim nou nog oor het.”

Nou kyk, ek het daar weggeroei so vinnig as ek kon om hom te loop verklik, maar toe hy nou só praat, is al die wind skielik uit my seile uit. Op my tyd roei ek verder en ek voel glad nie meer so seker of ek bly of jammer is dat ek op pad is wal toe nie. Toe ek so 'n vyftig tree weg is, roep Jim weer:

„Daar gaat hy, die goeiste ou Huck—die enigste wit jintelman wat nog ooit vir ou Jim woord gehou het!”

Toe voel ek net mooi naar. Maar ek sê vir myselfers: Ek móét dit doen. Ek kan daar nie verbykom nie. Net toe kom daar 'n skuit met twee mans met gewere; en hulle hou stil en ek hou stil.

Een van hulle vra: „Wat se ding is dit daar oorkant?”

„'n Stuk vlot,” sê ek.

„Hoort jy daarby?”

„Ja, meneer.”

„Enige ander mans daarop?”

„Net een.”

„Hm. Daar't vanaand vyf slawe weggehol, daar aan die bokant van die bog, sien? Is die man daar op jou vlot wit of swart?”

Ek antwoord nie dadelik nie. Ek probeér wel, maar die woorde wil nie mooi kom nie. 'n Sekonde of wat probeer ek my bes om my moed bymekaar te skraap en maar met die hele sak patats vorendag te kom, maar ek kon net nie. Ek had wragtig nie die moed van 'n konyn nie. Toe ek begin agterkom dat ek aan die ingee is, laat ek maar die hele ding vaar en ek sê: „Hy's wit.”

„Ek skat ons sal maar self gaan seker maak.”

„Julle kan gerus,” sê ek. „Want dis Pa wat daar op die vlot is en dalk kan julle my sommer help om die vlot wal toe te sleep, na die lig toe. Want hy's siek—en ma en Mary-Ann ook.”

„Verduiwels! Kyk, boet, ons is haastig, maar ek skat ons moet maar eers gaan hand bysit. Roei jong, dat ons kan opskud.”

Ek vat my spaantjie vas en hulle pak hulle spane. Na so 'n paar hale sê ek:

„Pa sal julle baie dankbaar wees, dit kan ek vir julle sê. Al die ander mense maak dat hulle wegkom as ek hulp soek om die vlot wal toe te sleep—en ek kan dit nie allenig doen nie.”

„Dis vervlaks gemeen van hulle. Snaaks ook. Luister, boet, wat makeer jou pa nou eintlik?”

„Dis . . . e . . . ag nou ja, dis nie baie ernstig nie.”

Hulle hou op met roei. Ons is nou sommer naby die vlot. Een van hulle sê:

„Boet, nou lieg jy. Wat makeer jou pa regtig? Toe, antwoord nou, anders kry jy dalk 'n oorveeg.”

„Ek sal sê, meneer. Rêrig ek sal. Maar moet tog asseblief nie weg- gaan

nie. Dis . . . dis . . . Asseblieftog, menere, as julle net hier in julle skuit bly en trek, kan ek die tou gaan vasmaak: dan hoef julle nie naby ons skuit te kom nie. Asseblieftog!”

„Tru, John, tru!” sê die een. Hulle roei ’n entjie terug. „Hou jy sóontoe, boet, weg van ons af— stuurboord toe. Vervlaks, ek sweer die wind waai dit hiernatoe. Jou pa het pokke, boeta, en jy weet dit verbrands goed. Hoekom het jy nie reguit so gesê nie? Wil jy die hele wêreld loop aansteek?”

Ek begin half slobber:

„Ek ... ek het dit vir al die ander mense vertel en dan’t hulle net altyd padgegee en ons laat bly.”

„Arme knaap, daar steek nogal iets in wat jy sê. Ons is baie jammer vir jou, maar ons . . . gits man, ons wil mos darem nie pokke hê nie! Luister, ek sal jou sê wat jy kan doen. Moenie op jou eentjie probeer land nie, jy sal net alles fyn en flenters breek. Laat die vlot nog so ’n twintig myl verder dryf, dan sal jy ’n dorp op die linkerwal kry. Teen daardie tyd sal die son al hooguit wees. Loop soek dan weer hulp, maar sê vir die mense jou pa-hulle het verkoue en koors. Moenie jou weer onnosel hou en die mense laat raai wat makeer nie. Nou kyk, ons probeer jou nou ’n guns bewys. Wees nou soet en maak dat jy die twintig myl ver van ons af wegkom. Dit sal jou niks help om daar by die lig te wil land nie—dis net ’n saagmeul. Hoor hier: ek skat jou pa is maar aan die arm kant en dit lyk of die ongeluk hom ry. Ek sit vir jou ’n goudstuk van twintig dollar hier op die plank neer—vat dit as dit by jou verbykom. Ek voel nou baie sleg om jou so in jou ellende te laat, maar—genugtig!—pokke is darem ook nie kinderspeletjies nie, nê?”

„Wag bietjie, Parker,” sê die ander man. „Laat ek ook ’n twintig- stuk hier op die plank neersit. Tot siens, boet. Maak nou soos meneer Parker jou gesê het, dan kom alles reg.”

„So is dit, jong. Tot siens, tot siens! As jy dalk van die negers raak- loop wat weggehol het, kry iemand om jou te help en keer hulle aan —dan slaan jy dalk nog ’n paar ekstra pitte los!”

„Tot siens, meneer,” antwoord ek. „Ek sal g’n weghe-slaaf by my laat verbykom as ék dit kan help nie!”

Toe gaan hulle vort en ek klouter terug op die vlot, taamlik bek-af oor my agterbaksheid, want ek weet alte goed hoe verkeerd ek opge- tree het. Maar dit sou tog nie help om die saak te probeer verander en ’n slag iets *goeds* te doen nie. As mens nie reg begin as jy klein is nie, staan jy g’n kans nie: as hy die dag in die knyp raak, dan’s daar niks om hom by sy plig te hou nie en dan val hy voor die versoeking. Maar toe dink ek ’n rukkie ná en ek vra vir myself: Wag nou so ’n bietjie—sê nou jy’t die regte ding gedoen en vir Jim loop verklap, dink jy jy sou dán beter gevoel het? Nee, besluit ek, ek sou maar net dieselfde gevoel het. Nou ja, watse nut het dit dan om te leer om reg te doen as dit so vrek swaar is om reg te doen en dis so maklik om verkeerd te doen—en op die ou end is die resultaat tog maar dieselfde? Dié vraag het my vasgevang. Ek kon hom nie beantwoord nie. Toe besluit ek om maar liewers

niks verder oor die ding te torring nie. Voortaan sou ek net doen wat die gerieflikste is.

Ek gaan by die tent in, maar Jim is nie daar nie. Ek soek die hele vlot deur, maar hy's nêrens te sien nie. „Jim!” roep ek.

„Hier's ek, Huck. Is hulle weg? Moenie so hard praat nie.” Hy dryf daar in die water onder die stertspaan met net sy neus bokant die oppervlak. Ja, hulle is vort, sê ek vir hom; dus klim hy terug op die vlot.

„Ek het heeltyd geluister wat julle praat,” sê hy. „Ek het toe mar innie water geglip en besluit ek gaat wal toe swem as hulle hiernatoe kom. Dan swem ek weer trug vlot toe nes hulle vort is. Maar jinnetog, Huck, jy't hulle darem goed verneuk! So 'n saaitstep het ek nog nie van gehoor nie. Ek sê vir jou, jong: jy't ou Jim se lewe gered. En ou Jim sallit so nooit as te nooit vergeet nie.”

Toe begin ons oor die geld praat. Dit was nou sommer 'n aardige klomp—twintig dollars elk. Jim was nou doodseker hy kon 'n kaartjie op 'n stoomboot koop en dan sou daar nog genoeg geld oor wees vir so ver as wat ons in die vry provinsies wil inry. Twintig myl was glad nie meer te ver vir die vlot nie—maar hy't darem gewens ons was klaar daar.

Teen dagbreek het ons vasgemeer en Jim was danig vol femies oor die wegsteek van die vlot. Die res van die dag het hy gewerskaf om al die goed in bondels toe te knoop en reg te maak om pad te gee van die vlot af.

So teen tienuur die aand gewaar ons 'n dorp se liggies ver na die linkerkant toe af. Ek roei met die kano wal toe om te gaan verneem en na 'n rukkie kry ek 'n man met 'n skuit op die rivier, besig om 'n vislyn op te stel.

Ek roei tot teenaan hom en vra: „Meneer, is daardie dorp Cairo?”

„Cairo? Nee. Jy's 'n simpel aap om so te vra.”

„Watter dorp is dit dan, meneer?”

„As jy wil weet, kan jy daar loop vra. En as jy my nog 'n half- minuut lank hier pla, sal jy iets kry waarvan jy nie baie hou nie.”

Toe roei ek maar liewer terug vlot toe. Jim was nou sommer bitter teleurgesteld, maar ek het hom getroos: die volgende plek sou wel Cairo wees, het ek gereken.

Net voor dagbreek is ons by nog 'n dorp verby, maar die wêreld was steilerig daarlangs—dus het ek nie eens gaan verneem nie. Want in Cairo se geweste was daar g'n stuk bergagtigheid nie, het Jim gesê. Ek het vergeet daarvan. Daar het ons in elk geval toe maar vir die dag vasgemeer aan 'n slonsbank bly lê, sommer kortby die linker- wal.

Ek het stadigaan begin agterdogtig raak. Jim ook.

„Het ons nie dalk daardie nag in die mis by Cairo verbygery nie?” vra ek eindelik.

„Moenie daarvan praat nie, Huck,” antwoord hy. „Arme negers soos ek het nooit g'n stukkie geluk nie. Ek het nog allietyd *gedink* daai ratelslang se vel is nog nie ytgewerk nie.”

„Ek wens ek het nooit die vel raakgesien nie, Jim. Ai, ek *wens* ek het dit

nooit met g'n oog gesien nie!"

„Dissie jou skuld nie, Huck. Jy't nie geweet nie. Moenie jouself sta' en beskilling nie."

Toe die dag begin breek, kon ons mooi sien dat dit helder Ohio- water is wat hier teen die wal aanspoel. En daar diékant toe was dit modderig soos altyd. Ja-nee, Cairo was dus ons neusie verby.

Ons het die saak goed bespreek. Om grondlangs te vlug sou nie alte wys wees nie, en dit was natuurlik onmoontlik om met die vlot stroom-op te reis. Al wat oorbly, was om maar te wag dat dit weer donker word en dan met die kano die terugpad te kies—en te hoop vir die beste. Dus het ons die hele lieue dag daar tussen die katoen- bosse geslaap sodat ons kon uitrus vir die harde werk. En toe ons teen skemer teruggaan vlot toe—toe's die kano skoonveld.

'n Hele ruk het g'neen van ons 'n woord gesê nie. Daar wás niks om te sê nie. Ons het altwee goed geweet dis weer die slangvel se werk—hoekom dus nog praat daaroor? Dit sou net lyk asof ons foutsoekerig is en dan bring ons net nóg ongeluk oor ons. En so sou dit aanhou en aanhou tot ons leer om ons snaters te hou.

Naderhand begin ons toe maar bespreek wat ons wél te doen staan. Daar was maar één uitweg: ons moes verder afdrywe met die vlot totdat ons dalk iewers 'n kano te kope kry om in terug te gaan. Ons was nie van plan om op Pa se manier een te „leen" as daar niemand naby is nie: dit sou net agtervolgers op ons spoor sit.

En so is ons toe maar weer donkeraand vort.

Enigiemand wat nou nog nie glo dat dit malligheid is om aan 'n slangvel te vat nie, ná alles wat daardie vel aan ons gedoen het, moet maar net nog 'n entjie verder lees en sien wat die ding nóg met ons laat gebeur het.

Kano's moet mens gaan koop waar jy vlotte op die wal uitgesleep sien lê. Maar ons het g'n enkele vlot teen die kant gewaar nie, dus het ons meer as drie uur lank verder gedrywe. Die nag het begin grys word, en taamlik dig—en dis die tweede ergste ding wat mens kan oorkom, ná mis. Jy kan glad nie die fatsoen van die rivier uitmaak nie en jy kan nie ver voor jou uitsien nie. Dit het baie laat en stil begin word; toe kom daar skielik 'n stoomboot in ons rigting aan, stroom-op. Ons het die lantern aangesteek en gereken die skip sal dit gewaar. Gewoonlik het die bote wat stroom-op vaar, nooit te danig naby ons verbygekom nie, want hulle volg die dieper lope en die stiller water al aan die riwwe se onderkant; maar op nagte soos dié beur hulle eenvoudig al in die kanaal langs op, teen die hele geweld van die rivier in.

Ons kon die skip hoor sukkeldreun, maar ons kon niks sien totdat hy hier kortby ons verskyn nie. En hy stuur hier pylreg op ons af. Hulle maak baie maal so om te sien hoe naby hulle aan jou kan verbykom sonder om jou te raak; party slae hap die wiele 'n stomp af en dan steek die skipper sy kop uit en lag en dink hy's kaas. Nou ja, hy mik toe ook in ons rigting en ons dag hy gaan probeer om teen ons verby te skuur, maar dit lyk glad nie of hy wil swenk nie. Dis 'n grote daarby—en haastig: nes 'n groot swart wolk met rye

glim- wurms rondom. Toe, skielik, swel die skip groot en skrikwekkend hier kort voor ons uit, met 'n lang ry wydoop oonddeure soos rooi- warm tande; en die ontsettende boeg met sy relings toring hier reg bokant ons uit. Iemand skree op ons en die klokke raak aan't lui om die motore te laat afsluit en daar word gevloek en geskel, en stoom blaas en fluit. . . en toe Jim aan die een kant oorboord spring en ek anderkant, toe ploeg die gevaarte hier dwarsdeur ons vlot.

Ek duik diep af en mik om die bodem te haal, want daar's 'n dertigvoetwiel wat bokant my moet verbymaal en ek wou heelwat ruimte laat vir dié affêre. Ek kon nog altyd 'n minuut lank onder water bly, maar dié slag het ek dit seker 'n minuut en 'n half lank uitgehou. Toe skiet ek haastig op oppervlakte toe, reg om te bars. Ek skiet tot by my kieliebakkies bokant die rivier uit en blaas die water uit my neus en hyg na asem. Daar was natuurlik 'n kwaai stroom; en natuurlik het die vervloekte boot sy motore weer aangeskakel net tien sekondes nadat die goed afgesluit is, want hulle steur hulle mos nooit veel aan vlotvaarders nie. En daar trek hy toe weer teen die stroom op, weg in die digte weer, al kon ek die geluid nog duidelik hoor.

Twaalf keer het ek Jim se naam uitgeskreu, maar daar was g'n antwoord nie. Toe gryp ek maar 'n plank vas wat by my verbygedryf kom terwyl ek besig is om water te trap, en ek kry koers wal toe met die plank voor my uitgestoot. Ek gewaar egter gou-gou dat die stroom na die linkeroewer se kant toe swenk; ek was met ander woorde besig om dwars daaroor te sny. Sonder meer swaai ek toe om en gee lyf.

Dit was een van daardie lang, skuins oortogte wat 'n goeie twee myl breed is, dus het dit my 'n hele ruk geneem om anderkant aan te kom. Ek het veilig geland en teen die wal uitgeklouter. Ek kon nie danig ver sien nie, maar ek het so 'n kwartmyl ver oor ongelyke grond rondgestrompel en toe half by 'n groot outydse dubbele paal- huis verbygedwaal voor ek dit raakgesien het. Ek was van plan om te maak dat ek daar wegkom, maar 'n spul honde het uitgespring en my blaffend en tjankend bestorm: dus het ek my maar bedink en botstil gaan staan.

SECTION 17

In about half a minute somebody spoke out of a window, without putting his head out, and says:

“Be done, boys! Who’s there?”

I says:

“It’s me.”

“Who’s me?”

“George Jackson, sir.”

“What do you want?”

“I don’t want nothing, sir. I only want to go along by, but the dogs won’t let me.”

“What are you prowling around here this time of night, for—hey?”

“I warn’t prowling around, sir; I fell overboard off of the steamboat.”

“Oh, you did, did you? Strike a light there, somebody. What did you say your name was?”

“George Jackson, sir. I’m only a boy.”

“Look here; if you’re telling the truth, you needn’t be afraid—nobody ’ll hurt you. But don’t try to budge; stand right where you are. Rouse out Bob and Tom, some of you, and fetch the guns. George Jackson, is there anybody with you?”

“No, sir, nobody.”

I heard the people stirring around in the house, now, and see a light. The man sung out:

“Snatch that light away, Betsy, you old fool—ain’t you got any sense? Put it on the floor behind the front door. Bob, if you and Tom are ready, take your places.”

“All ready.”

“Now, George Jackson, do you know the Shepherdsons?”

“No, sir—I never heard of them.”

“Well, that may be so, and it mayn’t. Now, all ready. Step forward, George Jackson. And mind, don’t you hurry—come mighty slow. If there’s anybody with you, let him keep back—if he shows himself he’ll be shot. Come along, now. Come slow; push the door open, yourself—just enough to squeeze in, d’ you hear?”

I didn’t hurry, I couldn’t if I’d a wanted to. I took one slow step at a time, and there warn’t a sound, only I thought I could hear my heart. The dogs were as still as the humans, but they followed a little behind me. When I got to the three log doorsteps, I heard them unlocking and unbarring and unbolting. I put my hand on the door and pushed it a little and a little more, till somebody said, “There, that’s enough—put your head in.” I done it, but I judged they would take it off.

The candle was on the floor, and there they all was, looking at me, and me at them, for about a quarter of a

minute. Three big men with guns pointed at me, which made me wince, I tell you; the oldest, gray and about sixty, the other two thirty or more—all of them fine and handsome—and the sweetest old gray-headed lady, and back of her two young women which I couldn't see right well. The old gentleman says:

“There—I reckon it's all right. Come in.”

As soon as I was in, the old gentleman he locked the door and barred it and bolted it, and told the young men to come in with their guns, and they all went in a big parlor that had a new rag carpet on the floor, and got together in a corner that was out of range of the front windows—there warn't none on the side. They held the candle, and took a good look at me, and all said, “Why *he* ain't a Shepherdson—no, there ain't any Shepherdson about him.” Then the old man said he hoped I wouldn't mind being searched for arms, because he didn't mean no harm by it—it was only to make sure. So he didn't pry into my pockets, but only felt outside with his hands, and said it was all right. He told me to make myself easy and at home, and tell all about myself; but the old lady says:

“Why bless you, Saul, the poor thing's as wet as he can be; and don't you reckon it may be he's hungry?”

“True for you, Rachel—I forgot.”

So the old lady says:

“Betsy” (this was a nigger woman), “you fly around and get him something to eat, as quick as you can, poor thing; and one of you girls go and wake up Buck and tell him—Oh, here he is himself. Buck, take this little

stranger and get the wet clothes off from him and dress him up in some of yours that's dry."

Buck looked about as old as me—thirteen or fourteen^{e1} or along there, though he was a little bigger than me. He hadn't on anything but a shirt, and he was very frowsy-headed. He come in gaping and digging one fist into his eyes, and he was dragging a gun along with the other one. He says:

"Ain't they no Shepherdsons around?"

They said, no, 'twas a false alarm.

"Well," he says, "if they'd a ben some, I reckon I'd a got one."

They all laughed, and Bob says:

"Whv, Buck, they might have scalped us all, you've been so slow in coming."

"Well, nobody come after me, and it ain't right. I'm always kep' down; I don't get no show."

"Never mind, Buck, my boy," says the old man, "you'll have show enough, all in good time, don't you fret about that. Go 'long with you now, and do as your mother told you."

When we got up stairs to his room, he got me a coarse shirt and a roundabout^{e2} and pants of his, and I put them on. While I was at it he asked me what my name was, but before I could tell him, he started to telling me about a blue jay and a young rabbit he had caught in the woods day before yesterday, and he asked me where Moses was when the candle went out^{e3}. I said I

didn't know; I hadn't heard about it before, no way.

"Well, guess," he says.

"How'm I going to guess," says I, "when I never heard tell about it before?"

"But you can guess, can't you? It's just as easy."

"*Which* candle?" I says.

"Why, any candle," he says.

"I don't know where he was," says I; "where was he?"

"Why he was in the *dark!* That's where he was!"

"Well, if you knowed where he was, what did you ask me for?"

"Why, blame it, it's a riddle, don't you see? Say, how long are you going to stay here? You got to stay always. We can just have booming times—they don't have no school now. Do you own a dog? I've got a dog—and he'll go in the river and bring out chips that you throw in. Do you like to comb up, Sundays, and all that kind of foolishness? You bet I don't, but ma she makes me. Confound these ole britches, I reckon I'd better put 'em on, but I'd ruther not, it's so warm. Are you all ready? All right—come along, old hoss."

Cold corn-pone, cold corn-beef, butter and butter-milk—that is what they had for me down there, and there ain't nothing better that ever I've come across yet. Buck and his ma and all of them smoked cob pipes, except the nigger woman, which was gone, and the two young women. They all smoked and talked, and I

eat and talked. The young women had quilts around them, and their hair down their backs. They all asked me questions, and I told them how pap and me and all the family was living on a little farm down at the bottom of Arkansaw, and my sister Mary Ann run off and got married and never was heard of no more, and Bill went to hunt them and he warn't heard of no more, and Tom and Mort died, and then there warn't nobody but just me and pap left, and he was just trimmed down to nothing, on account of his troubles; so when he died I took what there was left, because the farm didn't belong to us, and started up the river, deck passage, and fell overboard; and that was how I come to be here. So they said I could have a home there as long as I wanted it. Then it was most daylight, and everybody went to bed, and I went to bed with Buck, and when I waked up in the morning, drat it all, I had forgot what my name was. So I laid there about an hour trying to think, and when Buck waked up, I says:

"Can you spell, Buck?"

"Yes," he says.

"I bet you can't spell my name," says I.

"I bet you what you dare I can," says he.

"All right," says I, "go ahead."

"G-o-r-g-e J-a-x-o-n—there now," he says.

"Well," says I, "you done it, but I didn't think you could. It ain't no slouch of a name to spell—right off without studying."

I set it down, private, because somebody might want *me* to spell it, next, and so I wanted to be handy with it and rattle it off like I was used to it.

It was a mighty nice family, and a mighty nice house, too. I hadn't seen no house out in the country before that was so nice and had so much style. It didn't have an iron latch on the front door, nor a wooden one with a buckskin string, but a brass knob to turn, the same as houses in a town. There warn't no bed in the parlor, not a sign of a bed; but heaps of parlors in towns has beds in them. There was a big fireplace that was bricked on the bottom, and the bricks was kept clean and red by pouring water on them and scrubbing them with another brick; sometimes they washed them over with red water-paint that they call Spanish-brown, same as they do in town. They had big brass dog-irons that could hold up a saw-log. There was a clock on the middle of the mantel-piece, with a picture of a town painted on the bottom half of the glass front, and a round place in the middle of it for the sun, and you could see the pendulum swing behind it. It was beautiful to hear that clock tick; and sometimes when one of these peddlers had been along and scoured her up and got her in good shape, she would start in and strike a hundred and fifty^{e4} before she got tuckered out. They wouldn't took any money for her.

Well, there was a big outlandish parrot on each side of the clock, made out of something like chalk, and painted up gaudy. By one of the parrots was a cat made of crockery, and a crockery dog by the other; and when you pressed down on them they squeaked, but didn't open their mouths nor look different nor interested. They squeaked through underneath. There

was a couple of big wild-turkey-wing fans spread out behind those things. On a table in the middle of the room was a kind of a lovely crockery basket that had apples and oranges and peaches and grapes piled up in it which was much redder and yellower and prettier than real ones is, but they warn't real because you could see where pieces had got chipped off and showed the white chalk or whatever it was, underneath.

This table had a cover made out of beautiful oil-cloth, with a red and blue spread-eagle painted on it, and a painted border all around. It come all the way from Philadelphia, they said. There was some books too, piled up perfectly exact, on each corner of the table. One was a big family Bible, full of pictures. One was "Pilgrim's Progress," about a man that left his family it didn't say why. I read considerable in it now and then. The statements was interesting, but tough. Another was "Friendship's Offering," full of beautiful stuff and poetry; but I didn't read the poetry. Another was Henry Clay's Speeches^{e5}, and another was Dr. Gunn's Family Medicine^{e6}, which told you all about what to do if a body was sick or dead. There was a Hymn Book, and a lot of other books. And there was nice split-bottom chairs, and perfectly sound, too—not bagged down in the middle and busted, like an old basket.

They had pictures hung on the walls—mainly Washingtons and Lafayettes, and battles, and Highland Marys,¹⁸ and one called "Signing the Declaration." There was some that they called crayons^{e7}, which one of the daughters which was dead made her own self when she was only fifteen years old. They was different from any pictures I ever see

before; blacker, mostly, than is common. One was a woman in a slim black dress, belted small under the arm-pits, with bulges like a cabbage in the middle of the sleeves, and a large black scoop-shovel bonnet with a black veil, and white slim ankles crossed about with black tape, and very wee black slippers, like a chisel, and she was leaning pensive on a tombstone on her right elbow, under a weeping willow, and her other hand hanging down her side holding a white handkerchief and a reticule, and underneath the picture it said "Shall I Never See Thee More Alas." Another one was a young lady with her hair all combed up straight to the top of her head, and knotted there in front of a comb like a chair-back, and she was crying into a handkerchief and had a dead bird laying on its back in her other hand with its heels up, and underneath the picture it said "I Shall Never Hear Thy Sweet Chirrup More Alas." There was one where a young lady was at a window looking up at the moon, and tears running down her cheeks; and she had an open letter in one hand with black sealing-wax showing on one edge of it, and she was mashing a locket with a chain to it against her mouth, and underneath the picture it said "And Art Thou Gone Yes Thou Art Gone Alas." These was all nice pictures, I reckon, but I didn't somehow seem to take to them, because if ever I was down a little, they always give me the fan-tods. Everybody was sorry she died^{e8}, because she had laid out a lot more of these pictures to do, and a body could see by what she had done what they had lost. But I reckoned, that with her disposition, she was having a better time in the graveyard. She was at work on what they said was her greatest picture when she took sick, and every day

and every night it was her prayer to be allowed to live till she got it done, but she never got the chance. It was a picture of a young woman in a long white gown, standing on the rail of a bridge all ready to jump off, with her hair all down her back, and looking up to the moon, with the tears running down her face, and she had two arms folded across her breast, and two arms stretched out in front, and two more reaching up towards the moon—and the idea was, to see which pair would look best and then scratch out all the other arms; but, as I was saying, she died before she got her mind made up, and now they kept this picture over the head of the bed in her room, and every time her birthday come they hung flowers on it. Other times it was hid with a little curtain. The young woman in the picture had a kind of a nice sweet face, but there was so many arms it made her look too spideryⁱ¹⁴, seemed to me.

This young girl kept a scrap-book when she was alive, and used to paste obituaries and accidents and cases of patient suffering in it out of the *Presbyterian Observer*^{e9}, and write poetry after them out of her own head^{e10}. It was very good poetry. This is what she wrote about a boy by the name of Stephen Dowling Bots that fell down a well and was drowned:

ODE TO STEPHEN DOWLING BOTS, DEC'D.

And did young Stephen sicken.

And did young Stephen die?

And did the sad hearts thicken,

And did the mourners cry?

No; such was not the fate of

Young Stephen Dowling Bots;

Though sad hearts round him thickened,

'Twas not from sickness' shots.

No whooping-cough did rack his frame,

Nor measles drear, with spots;

Not these impaired the sacred name

Of Stephen Dowling Bots.

Despised love struck not with woe

That head of curly knots,

Nor stomach troubles laid him low,

Young Stephen Dowling Bots.

O no. Then list with tearful eye,

Whilst I his fate do tell.

His soul did from this cold world fly,

By falling down a well^{e11}.

They got him out and emptied him;

Alas it was too late;

His spirit was gone for to sport aloft

In the realms of the good and great.

If Emmeline Grangerford could make poetry like that before she was fourteen, there ain't no telling what she could a done^{e12} by-and-by. Buck said she could rattle off poetry like nothing. She didn't ever have to stop to think. He said she would slap down a line, and if she couldn't find anything to rhyme with it she would just scratch it out and slap down another one, and go ahead. She warn't particular, she could write about anything you choose to give her to write about, just so it was sadful. Every time a man died, or a woman died, or a child died, she would be on hand with her "tribute" before he was cold. She called them tributes. The neighbors said it was the doctor first, then Emmeline, then the undertaker—the undertaker never got in ahead of Emmeline but once, and then she hung fire on a rhyme for the dead person's name, which was Whistler. She warn't ever the same, after that^{e13}; she never complained, but she kind of pined away and did not live long. Poor thing, many's the time I made myself go up to the little room that used to be hers and get out her poor old scrap-book and read in it when her pictures had been aggravating me and I had soured on her a little. I liked all that family, dead ones and all, and warn't going to let anything come between us. Poor Emmeline made poetry about all the dead people when she was alive, and it didn't seem right that there warn't nobody to make some about her, now she was gone; so I tried to sweat out a verse or two myself, but I couldn't seem to make it go, somehow. They kept Emmeline's room trim and nice and all the things fixed in it just the way she liked to have them when she was alive, and nobody ever slept there. The old lady took care of the room herself, though there was plenty of niggers, and she sewed there a good deal and read

her Bible there, mostly.

Well, as I was saying about the parlor, there was beautiful curtains on the windows: white, with pictures painted on them, of castles with vines all down the walls, and cattle coming down to drink. There was a little old piano, too, that had tin pans in it, I reckon, and nothing was ever so lovely as to hear the young ladies sing, “The Last Link is Broken” and play “The Battle of Prague”^{e14} on it. The walls of all the rooms was plastered, and most had carpets on the floors, and the whole house was whitewashed on the outside.

It was a double house^{i15e15}, and the big open place betwixt them was roofed and floored, and sometimes the table was set there in the middle of the day, and it was a cool, comfortable place. Nothing couldn’t be better. And warn’t the cooking good^{e16}, and just bushels of it too!

Chapter 17

Omtrent ’n halfminuut daarná roep iemand

deur ’n venster (sonder om sy kop uit te steek): „Toe nou, voertsek! Wie’s daarbuite?”

„Ek,” sê ek.

„Wie’s ,ek’ ?”

„George Jackson, meneer.”

„Wat wil jy hê?”

„Niks, meneer. Ek wou net verbyloop, maar die honde het my voorgekeer.”

„Nou vir wat drentel jy dié tyd van die nag hier rond, hê?”

„Ek was nie aan die drentel nie, meneer. Ek het van die stoom- boot afgeval.”

„Jy het, nê? Maak lig daar, iemand. Hoe’t jy gesê—wat is jou naam?”

„George Jackson, meneer. Ek is maar net ’n seun.”

„Nou kyk hier: as jy die waarheid praat, hoef jy nie bang te wees nie. Niemand sal jou seermaak nie. Maar moenie roer nie: bly net daar waar jy is. Loop maak vir Bob en vir Tom wakker daar, julle,

en kry die gewere. George Jackson, is daar nog iemand by jou?” „Nee, meneer, niemand.”

Ek kon nou die mense in die huis hoor roer. Toe gaan daar ’n lig aan. Die man skree: „Vat weg daardie lig daar, Betsy, jou onnosel! Kan jy nie jou verstand gebruik nie ? Sit dit op die vloer agter die voordeur. Bob, as jy en Tom reg is; gaan staan op julle plekke.” „Almal reg.”

„Nou goed, George Jackson. Ken jy die Shepherdsons ?”

„Nee meneer. Nog nooit van hulle gehoor nie.”

„Hm. Dalk is dit so, en dalk nie. Nou toe, hou julle reg. Kom nader, George Jackson. En oppas, moenie vinnig beweeg nie—loop stadig. As daar iemand by jou is, laat hy agterbly: as hy sy kop uit- steek, skiet ons hom. Kom nou maar. Stadig. Maak die deur self oop —net op ’n skrefie, sodat jy kan inskuur, gehoor?”

Ek het glad nie vinnig beweeg nie—ek kon nie, al sou ek wou. Stadig, voetjie vir voetjie het ek nadergekom. Daar was g’n geluid hoorbaar nie, net my hart—so’t dit vir my geklink. Die honde was net so stil soos die mense, maar hulle het kort op my hakke agter my aangekom. Toe ek by die drie voordeurtreetjies van boomstompe kom, hoor ek hoe hulle oopsluit en grendels en skuiwe losmaak. Ek raak met my hand aan die deur en stoot dit ’n rapsie oop, en toe nóg ’n rapsie, tot iemand sê: „Toe, dis nou genoeg. Steek jou kop in.” Ek maak maar so, al is ek vas oortuig daarvan hulle gaan dit nou bo van my lyf afblaker.

Die kers is op die vloer, en hulle staan almal daar rondom; en hulle gluur my aan en ek gluur hulle aan—seker ’n kwartminuut lank. Drie groot mans met gewere op my gerig, genoeg om my te laat ril, ek sê julle. Die oudste was sowat sestig, en grys; die ander twee omtrent dertig of meer—aldrie mooi frisgebou—en die dierbaarste ou grys tantetjie, en dan nog twee jonger vroumense ágter haar wat ek nie mooi kon sien nie.

„Goed,” sê die oubaas eindelijk. „Dit lyk my dis in orde. Kom binne.”

Net toe ek binnekant is, sluit die oubaas die deur en grendel dit en skuif die skuiwe vas. Hy sê vir die jong mans om saam te kom met hul gewere en hulle gaan na ’n groot voorkamer met ’n nuwe rooi geweefde tapyt op die vloer; hulle gaan dig bymekaar staan, weg van die voorste ry vensters. (Aan die kant van die huis was daar nie vensters nie.) Hulle lig die kers op en beskou my van kop tot toon.

En eindelijk sê hulle almal: „Hy’s g’n Shepherdson nie. Nooit. Daar’s g’n Shepherdson-trek in hóm nie.”

Daarop sê die oubaas hy hoop nie ek gee om dat hulle my gaan deursoek vir wapens nie: hulle bedoel daar niks slegs mee nie—hulle wil net goed seker maak. Hy het toe ook glad nie in my sakke ge- snuffel nie, maar net buitelangs met sy hande rond-gevoel-voel, en toe gesê dis in orde. Toe sê hy ek moet

gaan sit en my tuismaak en hom alles omtrent myself vertel.

Maar die ou tante sê: „My goeiste dan, Saul, die arme ding is watersopnat; en dink jy nie hy's miskien honger ook nie?”

„Dis waar, Rachel. Ek het vergeet daarvan.”

Toe roep die ou tante 'n negervrou. „Betsy,” sê sy, „spring gou en kry vir hom iets om te eet. Sommer gou-gou, arme ding. En een van julle meisiekinders: loop maak vir Buck wakker en sê vir hom . . . O, hier's hy nou self. Buck, neem die vreemdelingetjie saam met jou en trek dié nat klere van hom uit en gee vir hom van jou droës.” Buck het omtrent my jare gelyk—so 'n dertien, veertien se stryk, al was hy 'n raps groter as ek. Hy't net 'n hemp aangehad en sy hare het maar deurmekaarderig gelyk. Hy't gaap-gaap daar ingekom en al met die een vuis in sy oë gevryf; en in die ander hand het hy 'n geweer saamgesleep.

„Ek dog daar's Shepherdsons in die buurt ?” sê hy.

Nee, sê hulle, dit was 'n vals alarm gewees.

„Wel, as daar van hulle hier rond was, dan't ek sekerlik een plat- getrek,” antwoord hy.

Die hele klomp lag, en Bob sê: „Goeiste, Buck, hulle kon ons almal hier keelafgesny het, so't jy gedraai.”

„Niemand het my kom roep nie. Dis mos nie reg nie. Ek moet maar altyd bly slaap. Ek kry nooit 'n kans nie.”

„Toe maar, Buck, my boet,” sê die oubaas. „Jy sal jou kans nog kry, wag maar. Moenie haastig word nie. Toe, skoert nou en gaan doen wat jou ma vir jou gesê het.”

Toe ons bo in sy kamer kom, gee hy my een van sy growwe hemde en 'n baadjie en 'n broek, en ek trek die goed aan. Terwyl ek daarmee besig is, vra hy my wat my naam is, maar nog voor ek kan antwoord, begin hy my vertel van 'n spreu en 'n konyntjie wat hy twee dae gelede in die bosse gevang het, en toe vra hy vir my waar was Moses toe die kers doodgewaai het. Dit weet ek g'n, antwoord ek, want van so iets het ek nog nooit gehoor nie.

„Nou ráái dan,” sê hy.

„Hoe moet ek raai as ek nog nooit daarvan gehoor het nie?” vra ek.

„Maar jy kan tog raai, of hoe? Dis net so maklik.”

„Wát se kers?” vra ek.

„Enige kers, man.”

„Ek weet g'n waar hy was nie,” antwoord ek. „Waar was hy?”

„In die *donker!* Dis waar hy was!”

„Nou as jy dan weet waar hy was, vir wat vra jy vir my ?”

„Maar my wereld, dis mos 'n raaisel, verstaan jy nie? Sê my: hoe lank gaan jy hier bly? Jy kan gems sommer vir altyd bly. Ons kan ons gate uit geniet—daar's nie nou skool nie. Het jy 'n hond ? Ek het een, en hy kan in die rivier spring en takkies terugbring wat jy ingooi. Hou jy daarvan om Sondae hare te kam en op te drês en so aan ? Moenie dink ék hou daarvan nie, maar my ma *maak* my. Kyk net die simpel broek. Ek skat ek sal hom maar moet

aantrek, al is hy so warm. Is jy reg? Nou goed, kom dan, ou biel.”

Koue mielibrood, koue soutvleis, hotter en karringmelk—dis wat hulle daar onder vir my voorgesit het, en ek sweer ek het nog nooit iets lekkerders geëet nie. Buck en sy ma en al die ander het mieliëpype gerook—behalwe die negervrou wat al uit was, en die twee ander vroumense. Hulle’t almal daar sit en rook en praat terwyl ek eet en praat. Die twee jong vroumense het verekomberse om hulle gedraai gehad en hulle hare het los agter afgehang. Die hele klomp het my gepeper met vrae, en ek het hulle vertel dat ek en my pa en ons hele gesin op ’n klein plasie onder in Arkansas gewoon het, en dat my suster Mary-Ann weggeloop het om te gaan trou en nooit weer van haar laat hoor het nie, en dat Tom en Mort dood was; en daarná was net Pa en ek oor, en van al die moeilikhede was hý eintlik ook al oor die wal. En toe hy doodgaan, het ek maar die goedjies gevat wat daar oorgesiet het—want die plaas was nie ons s’n nie— en met die stoomboot stroom-op begin vaar. En toe val ek oorboord, en dis hoe ek hier beland het. Dadelik sê hulle almal dat ek maar daar kan bly net so lank soos ek wil. Teen dié tyd was dit al ampertjies oggend en almal is terug vere toe—ek saam met Buck. En toe ek weer wakker word, toe’t ek jou wrintie skoon vergeet wat my naam is! Seker ’n uur lank het ek daar lê en dink. En toe Buck naderhand ook wakker word, vra ek vir hom: „Buck, kan jy spel?”

„Ja,” sê hy.

„Ek wed jou jy kan nie my naam spel nie.”

„Ek wed jou ek kan!”

„Nou goed,” sê ek. „Laat ek hoor.”

En hy spel: „G-o-r-g-e J-a-x-o-n. Hoe’s daai?”

„Sowaar,” sê ek. „Jy’t dit reggekry. Ek het nie gedink jy sou kon nie. Dis nie kinderspeletjies om dié naam sommer so uit die vuus uit te spel sonder om vooraf te oefen nie.”

Stilletjies het ek dit neergeskryf, want wie weet: nou-nou vra iemand my om dit te spel, en dan wil ek dit darem prontweg doen asof ek gewoon is daaraan.

Dit was sommer ’n bak familie en ’n bak huis ook. Ek het nog nooit tevore ’n plaashuis gesien wat so lekker was en so deftig daarby nie. Daar was nie sommer ’n ysterknip aan die voordeur nie; nog minder een van hout met ’n riempie daaraan vas nie: dit was ’n behoorlike koperknop wat mens moes draai, nes in ’n dorpshuis. In die voorkamer was daar ook g’n bed nie—nie ’n téken van ’n bed nie, al is daar baie dorpshuise wat beddens in die voorkamer het. Daar was net ’n groot vuurherd, uitgemessel met stene op die vloer, en die stene is skoon en rooi gehou deur water daaroor te gooi en dit dan met ’n ander steen te skuur. Partykeer het hulle die hele affere met rooi waterverf gewas wat hulle „Spaansbruin” noem, nes hulle op die dorp maak. Daar was groot vuurbokke van koper waarop mens maklik ’n hele dik stomp kon laat rus. In die middel van die kaggelrak was daar ’n staanhorlosie, met ’n prentjie van ’n dorp op die onderste helfte van die glas geverf, met ’n ronde kol in die

middel vir die son, en mens kon die pendule daaragter sien swaai. Dit was alte mooi om daardie horlosie te hoor tik. En partykeer, as daar 'n slag 'n blikslaer die ding kom opvryf en regmaak het, dan't hy maklik honderd-en-vyftig keer geslaan voor hy weer opgehou het. Hulle sou dié horlosie vir niks ter wêreld verkoop nie.

Weerskante van die horlosie was daar 'n groot uitlandse papegaai. Dit was gemaak van iets soos kalkklip, en helder geverf. By een van die papegaai was daar 'n glaskat, by die ander een 'n glashond; en as jy op hulle druk, dan't hulle gepiep—maar sonder om hulle bekke oop te maak of anders te lyk of belang te stel. Die gepiep het hier van hulle onderkant af gekom. Agter dié goeters was daar 'n paar oopge- spreide waaiers van wildealkoenvere. Op 'n tafel in die middel van die kamer was daar 'n alte mooi soort glasmandjie met appels en lemoene en perskes en druiwe opgestawel daarin, baie rooier en geler en mooier as gewone vrugte—maar dit was nie regte vrugte nie, want mens kon hier en daar sien dat daar 'n puntjie afgesplits het sodat die wit kalk of wat-ook-al aan die onderkant gewys het.

Oor die tafel was daar 'n pragtige oliekleedjie met 'n rooi en blou arend met oopgespreide vlerke daarop geverf, en 'n geverfde randjie reg rondom. Dié ding het glo heelpad van Philadelphia af gekom. Daar was boeke ook, eksieperfeksie op mekaar gestawel op elke hoek van die tafel. Die een was die familiebybel, vol prente. Dan was daar *Die Pelgrim se Reis*, oor 'n man wat weggeloop het van sy familie af —hoekom, sê hulle nie. Ek het so af en toe nogal heelwat daarin gelees. Daar staan interessante dinge in, maar dis bietjie hoog vir my. Dan was daar *Gawes van Vriendskap*, vol pragtige goed en versies, maar ek het nie die versies gelees nie. Verder nog *Die Toesprake van Henry Clay* en Dr. Gunn se *Medisyne vir die Huisgesin* wat jou vertel het wat jy alles moet doen as iemand siek of dood was. Daar was ook nog 'n Gesangboek en 'n hele spul ander. En daar was lekker riempiestoele, somer goeie goed ook—glad nie so hangerig en papperig en voos in die middel soos 'n ou mandjie nie.

Aan die mure het daar prente gehang, veral van Washington en Lafayette, en oorlogstonele, en ander van Mary's van die Skotse Hooglande, en een met die naam van *Die Ondertekening van die Verklaring*. Daar was 'n paar wat hulle „sketse” genoem het, wat een van die dogters, wat nou dood was, self gedoen het toe sy vyftien was. Dié prente was anders as enigiets wat ek nog gesien het, veral swarter. Een was van 'n vrou in 'n dun swart rok, styf ingegord onder die arms, met bobbels soos koolkoppe in die middel van die moue, en 'n groot swart tuitkappie met 'n swart sluier, en dun wit enkels met swart bandjies kruis en dwars daaroor, en klein swart skoentjies, kompleet nes beiteljies; en sy't ingedagte met haar regterelmboog op 'n grafsteen geleun, onder 'n treurwilger, met haar ander hand slap langs haar sy, met 'n sakdoek en 'n handsakkie daarin. En onder die prent was daar geskryf: *O Wee, Sal Ek Jou Nooit Weer Sien?* Dan was daar een van 'n jong meisiekind met haar hare penorent op haar kop opgestawel, en daar vasgeknoop voor 'n kam wat soos

'n stoel se rugleuning gelyk het; sy was aan't grens in 'n sakdoek, en in haar ander hand het daar 'n dooie voëltjie op sy rug gelê, pote in die lug; en onder dié prent was daar geskryf: *O Wee, Jou Liedjie Sal Ek Nooit Weer Hoor*. Daar was nóg een, van 'n jong meisiekind wat by 'n venster staan en uitkyk na die maan, met trane wat oor haar wange loop. In die een hand hou sy 'n oop brief met 'n bietjie swart lak wat om die randjie krul; en teen haar mond druk sy 'n loketjie met 'n ketting daaraan vas. Daaronder staan geskryf: *O Wee, Is Jy Dan Weg, Ja Jy Is Weg*. Nou ja, ek skat dit was almal mooi prente, maar ek het nooit veel van hulle gehou nie; want as ek ooit 'n bietjie mis-rawel gevoel het, sou hulle my die horrelpieps gegee het. Almal was jammer oor haar dood, want sy het glo plannetjies geteken van 'n klomp ander prente wat sy nog wou maak, en aan dié wat sy klaar-gemaak het, kon mens sien wat daar verlore gegaan het. Maar wat, ek dink vir iemand wat soos sý voel, is dit baie lekkerder in die kerk-hof. Sy't glo sick geword terwyl sy besig was met wat hulle haar grootste prent genoem het, en sy't elke dag en elke nag gebed dat sy moet bly lewe tot die werk klaar was, maar sy't nooit kans gekry daarvoor nie. Dit was 'n prent van 'n jong vroumens in 'n lang wit rok, op die randjie van 'n brug, net reg om af te spring, met haar hare los oor haar rug en haar gesig opgelig maan se kant toe, met trane wat oor haar wange loop; en twee arms hou sy oor haar bors gevou, en nog twee steek uit vorentoe, en twee ander gryp op na die maan— sy was glo van plan om te kyk watter twee die beste sou lyk en dan die ander klomp uit te vee. Maar, soos ek gesê het, sy's dood voor sy kon besluit en nou hou hulle maar die prent oor die koppenent van die bed in haar kamer, en elke slag as sy verjaar, hang hulle blomme daaroor. Anders is dit gewoonlik toegemaak met 'n gordyntjie. Die meisiekind in die prent het nogal 'n aardige, mooierige gesig gehad, maar daar was so 'n klomp arms dat die ding vir my bietjie te veel na 'n spinnekop gelyk het.

Toe sy nog gelewe het, het die meisie glo 'n plakboek aangehou en dan al die doodsberigte, of berigte oor ongelukke of geduldige lyding uit die *Presbyterian Observer* uitgeknip en daarin geplak. Dan't sy sommer so uit haar kop uit versies by elkeen gemaak. Sommer baie goeie versies ook. Kyk byvoorbeeld wat sy geskrywe het oor 'n seun met die naam van Stephen Dowling Bots wat in 'n put geval en verdrink het:

ODE AAN STEPHEN DOWLING BOTS, SALIGER

Het Klein-Stefaans dalk siek geword,

Het Klein-Stefaans gesterf?

Het die harte almal swaar geword,

Het die draers gehuil op die werf?

O nee, van Fanus Dowling Bots Was dit die einde nie.

Al het die harte swaar geword Was dit nie oor siekte nie.

G'n kinkhoes het sy lyf laat skud Of masels uitgeslaan:

Dis nie die einde wat daar rus Oor Klein-Stefaans se naam.

Vergeefse liefde het ook nie Sy krulkop diep bedroef En pyne het hy nooit gely

*Om sy maag mee te beproef.
Maar luister na wat ek vertel Van wat vir hom oorval 't:
Sy siel is uit die wêreld uit Toe hy in 'n put geval 't.
Hy's uitgehaal en leeggepomp,
Maar hul was nie betyds.
In die hemel het hy reeds beland,
Met engele wedersyds.*

As Emmeline Grangerford sülke versies kon maak voor sy veer- tien was, dan sou ek graag wou sien wat sy daarná sou geskrywe het. Buck het my vertel hoe sy sommer so uit die vuus uit gedigte kon aframesel. Sy't nooit nodig gehad om eers 'n slag te dink nie. Sy sou 'n reel neerplak, het hy gesê, en as sy nie iets kon kry om daarmee te rym nie, dan sou sy dit net weer doodtrek en 'n ander een neerskryf. Sy't ook nie omgee waaroor sy skryf nie—jy kon haar maar enig- iets gee, solank dit net treurig was. Elke slag as 'n man of 'n vrou of 'n kind dood is, sou sy klaar wees met haar „huldiging” nog voor die lyk mooi koud was. „Huldigings”, dis wat sy hulle genoem het. Die bure het gesê die dokter kom eerste, dan Emmeline, dan die begrafnisondernemer—die ondernemer het Emmeline nooit gewen nie. Net één slag, en toe was dit omdat sy net nie 'n woord kon kry wat rym met die dooie man se van, Whistler, nie. Daarná was sy glo nooit weer dieselfde mens nie; sy't nooit gekla nie, maar sy't sommer net weggekwyn en nie meer lank bly lewe nie. Arme ding. Ek het sommer baie kere opgeklim daar na haar kamertjie toe en haar arme ou plakboek uitgehaal en daarin gelees: ek het my gewoonlik gedwing om dit te doen nes haar prente my omgekrap het en my bietjie vies gemaak het vir haar. Ek het gehou van al die mense in daardie gesin, dood of lewendig, en ek sou nie toelaat dat daar iets tussen ons kom nie. Anne Emmeline het versies oor al die dooie mense gemaak terwyl sy nog gelewe het, en dit het half gelyk of dit nie regwas dat daar niemand was om iets oor háár te skryf nou dat sy ook dood was nie. Dus het ek self probeer om 'n versie of wat uit te swoeg, maar dit wou net nie vorder nie. Hulle het Emmeline se kamer mooi vars en netjies gehou en alles net so laat bly soos wat sy dit in haar lewe gerangskik het. G'n ander mens het ooit daar geslaap nie. Die ou tante het self die kamer aan kant gemaak al was daar 'n hele klomp slawe; en gewoonlik het sy ook haar Bybel daar gaan sit en lees.

Maar ek was nog besig om van die voorkamer te vertel, met die pragtige gordyne voor die venster: wit, met prentjies daarop gevef— kastele met rankplante teen die mure, en beeste wat kom water suip. Daar was 'n klein ou klaviertjie ook. Dié ding moes blikpanne in sy binnekant gehad het, en dit was die mooiste soort mooi om te hoor hoe die meisiemense *Die laaste skakel is gebreek* daarby sing, of *Die Slag van Praag* daarop speel. Al die kamers se mure was uitgepleister, en in byna almal was daar tapyte op die vloere, en buitekant was die mure wit gevef.

Dit was 'n dubbeldoorhuis; en die groot oop stuk grond tussen die twee

helftes het 'n dak bo-oor gehad, en 'n behoorlike vloer, en partykeers is die tafel in die middel van die dag uitgedra soontoe, want dit was alte koel en lekker daar. Alles was somer piekfyn. En die kos, tog! Dit het vorentoe gesmaak en daar was hope daarvan!

SECTION 18

Col. Grangerford was a gentleman, you see. He was a gentleman all over; and so was his family. He was well born, as the saying is, and that's worth as much in a man as it is in a horse, so the Widow Douglas said, and nobody ever denied that she was of the first aristocracy in our town; and pap he always said it, too, though he warn't no more quality than a mud-cat, himself. Col. Grangerford was very tall and very slimⁱ¹⁶, and had a darkish-paly complexion, not a sign of red in it anywheres; he was clean-shaved every morning, all over his thin face, and he had the thinnest kind of lips, and the thinnest kind of nostrils, and a high nose, and heavy eyebrows, and the blackest kind of eyes, sunk so deep back that they seemed like they was looking out of caverns at you, as you may say. His forehead was high, and his hair was black and straight, and hung to his shoulders. His hands was long and thin, and every day of his life he put on a clean shirt and a full suit from head to foot made out of linen so white it hurt your eyes to look at it; and on Sundays he wore a blue tail-coat with brass buttons on it. He carried a mahogany cane with a silver head to it. There warn't no frivolishness about him, not a bit, and he warn't ever loud. He was as kind as he could be—you could feel that, you know, and so you had confidence. Sometimes he smiled, and it was good to see; but when he straightened himself up like a liberty-pole^{e1}, and the lightning begun to flicker out from under his eyebrows you wanted to climb a tree first, and find out what the matter was

afterwards. He didn't ever have to tell anybody to mind their manners—everybody was always good mannered where he was. Everybody loved to have him around, too; he was sunshine most always—I mean he made it seem like good weather. When he turned into a cloud-bank it was awful dark for a half a minute and that was enough; there wouldn't nothing go wrong again for a week.

When him and the old lady come down in the morning, all the family got up out of their chairs and give them good-day, and didn't set down again till they had set down. Then Tom and Bob went to the sideboard where the decanters was, and mixed a glass of bitters and handed it to him, and he held it in his hand and waited till Tom's and Bob's was mixed, and then they bowed and said "Our duty to you, sir, and madam;" and *they* bowed the least bit in the world and said thank you, and so they drank, all three, and Bob and Tom poured a spoonful of water on the sugar and the mite of whisky or apple brandy in the bottom of their tumblers, and give it to me and Buck, and we drank to the old people too.

Bob was the oldest, and Tom next. Tall, beautiful men with very broad shoulders and brown faces, and long black hair and black eyes. They dressed in white linen^{e2} from head to foot, like the old gentleman, and wore broad Panama hats.

Then there was Miss Charlotte, she was twenty-five, and tall and proud and grand, but as good as she could be, when she warn't stirred up; but when she was, she had a look that would make you wilt in your tracks, like her father. She was beautiful.

So was her sister, Miss Sophia, but it was a different kind. She was gentle and sweet, like a dove, and she was only twenty.

Each person had their own nigger to wait on them—Buck, too. My nigger had a monstrous easy time, because I warn't used to having anybody do anything for me, but Buck's was on the jump most of the time.

This was all there was of the family, now; but there used to be more—three sons; they got killed; and Emmeline that died.

The old gentleman owned a lot of farms, and over a hundred niggers. Sometimes a stack of people would come there, horseback, from ten or fifteen mile around, and stay five or six days, and have such junketings round about and on the river, and dances and picnics in the woods, day-times, and balls at the house, nights. These people was mostly kin-folks of the family. The men brought their guns with them. It was a handsome lot of quality, I tell you.

There was another clan of aristocracy around there—five or six families—mostly of the name of Shepherdson. They was as high-toned, and well born, and rich and grand, as the tribe of Grangerfords. The Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords used the same steamboat landing, which was about two mile above our house; so sometimes when I went up there with a lot of our folks I used to see a lot of the Shepherdsons there, on their fine horses.

One day Buck and me was away out in the woods, hunting, and heard a horse coming. We was crossing the road. Buck says:

“Quick! Jump for the woods!”

We done it, and then peeped down the woods through the leaves. Pretty soon a splendid young man come galloping down the road, setting his horse easy and looking like a soldier. He had his gun across his pommel. I had seen him before. It was young Harney Shepherdson. I heard Buck’s gun go off at my ear, and Harney’s hat tumbled off from his head. He grabbed his gun and rode straight to the place where we was hid. But we didn’t wait. We started through the woods on a run. The woods warn’t thick, so I looked over my shoulder, to dodge the bullet, and twice I seen Harney cover Buck with his gun; and then he rode away the way he come—to get his hat, I reckon, but I couldn’t see. We never stopped running till we got home. The old gentleman’s eyes blazed a minute—’twas pleasure, mainly, I judged—then his face sort of smoothed down, and he says, kind of gentle:

“I don’t like that shooting from behind a bush. Why didn’t you step into the road, my boy?”

“The Shepherdsons don’t, father. They always take advantage.”

Miss Charlotte she held her head up like a queen while Buck was telling his tale, and her nostrils spread and her eyes snapped. The two young men looked dark, but never said nothing. Miss Sophia she turned pale, but the color come back when she found the man warn’t hurt.

Soon as I could get Buck down by the corn-cribs under the trees by ourselves, I says:

"Did you want to kill him, Buck?"

"Well, I bet I did."

"What did he do to you?"

"Him? He never done nothing to me."

"Well, then, what did you want to kill him for?"

"Why nothing—only it's on account of the feud^{e3}."

"What's a feud?"

"Why, where was you raised? Don't you know what a feud is?"

"Never heard of it before—tell me about it."

"Well," says Buck, "a feud is this way. A man has a quarrel with another man, and kills him; then that other man's brother kills *him*; then the other brothers, on both sides, goes for one another; then the *cousins* chip in—and by-and-by everybody's killed off, and there ain't no more feud. But it's kind of slow, and takes a long time."

"Has this one been going on long, Buck?"

"Well I should *reckon*! it started thirty year ago, or som'ers along there. There was trouble 'bout something and then a lawsuit to settle it; and the suit went agin one of the men, and so he up and shot the man that won the suit—which he would naturally do, of course. Anybody would."

"What was the trouble about, Buck?—land?"

"I reckon maybe—I don't know."

"Well, who done the shooting?—was it a Grangerford or a Shepherdson?"

"Laws, how do I know? it was so long ago."

"Don't anybody know?"

"Oh, yes, pa knows, I reckon, and some of the other old folks; but they don't know, now, what the row was about in the first place."

"Has there been many killed, Buck?"

"Yes—right smart chance of funerals. But they don't always kill. Pa's got a few buck-shot in him; but he don't mind it 'cuz he don't weigh much anyway. Bob's been carved up some with a bowie, and Tom's been hurt once or twice."

"Has anybody been killed this year, Buck?"

"Yes, we got one and they got one. 'Bout three months ago, my cousin Bud, fourteen year old, was riding through the woods, on t'other side of the river, and didn't have no weapon with him, which was blame' foolishness, and in a lonesome place he hears a horse a-coming behind him, and sees old Baldy Shepherdson a-linkin' after him with his gun in his hand and his white hair a-flying in the wind; and 'stead of jumping off and taking to the brush, Bud 'lowed he could outrun him; so they had it, nip and tuck, for five mile or more, the old man a-gaining all the time; so at last Bud seen it warn't any use, so he stopped and faced around so as to have the bullet holes in front,

you know, and the old man he rode up and shot him down. But he didn't git much chance to enjoy his luck, for inside of a week our folks laid *him* out."

"I reckon that old man was a coward, Buck."

"I reckon he *warn't* a coward. Not by a blame' sight. There ain't a coward amongst them Shepherdsons—not a one. And there ain't no cowards amongst the Grangerfords, either. Why, that old man kep' up his end in a fight one day, for a half an hour, against three Grangerfords, and come out winner. They was all a-horseback; he lit off of his horse and got behind a little wood-pile, and kep' his horse before him to stop the bullets; but the Grangerfords staid on their horses and capered around the old man, and peppered away at him, and he peppered away at them. Him and his horse both went home pretty leaky and crippled, but the Grangerfords had to be *fetched* home—and one of 'em was dead, and another died the next day. No, sir, if a body's out hunting for cowards, he don't want to fool away any time amongst them Shepherdsons, becuz they don't breed any of that *kind*."

Next Sunday we all went to church, about three mile, everybody a-horseback. The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching—all about brotherly love, and suchlike tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and had such a powerful lot to say about faith, and good works, and free grace, and preforeordination, and I don't know what all, that it did seem to me to be one of

the roughest Sundays I had run across yet.

About an hour after dinner everybody was dozing around, some in their chairs and some in their rooms, and it got to be pretty dull. Buck and a dog was stretched out on the grass in the sun, sound asleep. I went up to our room, and judged I would take a nap myself. I found that sweet Miss Sophia standing in her door, which was next to ours, and she took me in her room and shut the door very soft, and asked me if I liked her, and I said I did; and she asked me if I would do something for her and not tell anybody, and I said I would. Then she said she'd forgot her Testament, and left it in the seat at church, between two other books and would I slip out quiet and go there and fetch it to her, and not say nothing to nobody. I said I would. So I slid out and slipped off up the road, and there warn't anybody at the church, except maybe a hog or two, for there warn't any lock on the door, and hogs likes a puncheon floor in summer-time because it's coole⁴. If you notice, most folks don't go to church only when they've got to⁵; but a hog is different.

Says I to myself something's up—it ain't natural for a girl to be in such a sweat about a Testament; so I give it a shake, and out drops a little piece of paper with "*Half-past two*" wrote on it with a pencil. I ransacked it, but couldn't find anything else. I couldn't make anything out of that, so I put the paper in the book again, and when I got home and up stairs, there was Miss Sophia in her door waiting for me. She pulled me in and shut the door; then she looked in the Testament till she found the paper, and as soon as she read it she looked glad; and before a body could think, she grabbed me and give me a squeeze, and said I was

the best boy in the world, and not to tell anybody. She was mighty red in the face, for a minute, and her eyes lighted up and it made her powerful pretty. I was a good deal astonished, but when I got my breath I asked her what the paper was about, and she asked me if I had read it, and I said no, and she asked me if I could read writing, and I told her “no, only coarse-hand,”¹⁹ and then she said the paper warn’t anything but a book-mark to keep her place, and I might go and play now.

I went off down to the river, studying over this thing, and pretty soon I noticed that my nigger was following along behind. When we was out of sight of the house, he looked back and around a second, and then comes a-running, and says:

“Mars Jawge, if you’ll come down into de swamp, I’ll show you a whole stack o’ water-moccasins.”

Thinks I, that’s mighty curious; he said that yesterday. He oughter know a body don’t love water-moccasins enough to go around hunting for them. What is he up to anyway? So I says—

“All right, trot ahead.”

I followed a half a mile, then he struck out over the swamp and waded ankle deep as much as another half mile. We come to a little flat piece of land which was dry and very thick with trees and bushes and vines, and he says—

“You shove right in dah, jist a few steps, Mars Jawge, dah’s whah dey is. I’s seed ’m befo’, I don’t k’yer to see ’em no mo’.”

Then he slopped right along and went away, and pretty soon the trees hid him. I poked into the place a-ways, and come to a little open patch as big as a bedroom, all hung around with vines, and found a man laying there asleep—and by jings it was my old Jim!

I waked him up, and I reckoned it was going to be a grand surprise to him to see me again, but it warn't. He nearly cried, he was so glad, but he warn't surprised. Said he swum along behind me, that night, and heard me yell every time, but dasn't answer, because he didn't want nobody to pick *him* up, and take him into slavery again. Says he—

"I got hurt a little, en couldn't swim fas', so I wuz a considable ways behine you, towards de las'; when you landed I reck-'ned I could ketch up wid you on de lan' 'dout havin' to shout at you, but when I see dat house I begin to go slow. I 'uz off too fur to hear what dey say to you—I wuz 'fraid o' de dogs—but when it 'uz all quiet agin, I knowed you's in de house, so I struck out for de woods to wait for day. Early in de mawnin' some er de niggers come along, gwyne to de fields, en dey tuck me en showed me dis place, whah de dogs can't track me on accounts o' de water, en dey brings me truck to eat every night, en tells me how you's a gitt'n along."

"Why didn't you tell my Jack to fetch me here sooner, Jim?"

"Well, 'twarn't no use to 'sturb you, Huck, tell we could do sumfn—but we's all right, now. I ben a-buyin' pots en pans en vittles, as I got a chanst, en a patchin' up de raf', nights, when——"

"*What* raft, Jim?"

"Our ole raf'."

"You mean to say our old raft warn't smashed all to flinders?"

"No, she warn't. She was tore up a good deal—one en' of her was—but dey warn't no great harm done, on'y our traps was mos' all los'. Ef we hadn' dive' so deep en swum so fur under water, en de night hadn' ben so dark, en we warn't so sk'yerd, en ben sich punkin-heads, as de sayin' is, we'd a seed de raf'. But it's jis' as well we didn't, 'kase now she's all fixed up agin mos' as good as new, en we's got a new lot o' stuff, too, in de place o' what 'uz los'."

"Why, how did you get hold of the raft again, Jim—did you catch her?"

"How I gwyne to ketch her, en I out in de woods? No, some er de niggers foun' her ketched on a snag, along heah in de ben', en dey hid her in a crick, 'mongst de willows, en dey wuz so much jawin' 'bout which un 'um she b'long to de mos', dat I come to heah 'bout it pooty soon, so I ups en settles de trouble by tellin' 'um she don't b'long to none uv um, but to you en me; en I ast 'm if dey gwyne to grab a young white genlman's propaty, en git a hid'n for it? Den I gin 'm ten cents apiece, en dey 'uz mighty well satisfied, en wisht some mo' raf's 'ud come along en make 'm rich agin. Dey's mighty good to me, dese niggers is, en whatever I wants 'm to do fur me, I doan' have to ast 'm twice, honey. Dat Jack's a good nigger, en pooty smart."

"Yes, he is. He ain't ever told me you was here; told

me to come, and he'd show me a lot of water-moccasins. If anything happens, *he* ain't mixed up in it. He can say he never seen us together, and it'll be the truth."

I don't want to talk much about the next day. I reckon I'll cut it pretty short. I waked up about dawn, and was a-going to turn over and go to sleep again, when I noticed how still it was—didn't seem to be anybody stirring. That warn't usual. Next I noticed that Buck was up and gone. Well, I gets up, a-wondering, and goes down stairs—nobody around; everything as still as a mouse. Just the same outside; thinks I, what does it mean? Down by the wood-pile I comes across my Jack, and says:

"What's it all about?"

Says he:

"Don't you know, Mars Jawge?"

"No," says I, "I don't."

"Well, den, Miss Sophia's run off! 'deed she has. She run off in de night, sometime—nobody don't know jis' when—run off to git married to dat young Harney Shepherdson, you know—leastways, so dey 'spec. De fambly foun' it out, 'bout half an hour ago—maybe a little mo'—en' I *tell* you dey warn't no time los'. Sich another hurryin' up guns en hosses *you* never see! De women folks has gone for to stir up de relations, en ole Mars Saul en de boys tuck dey guns en rode up de river road for to try to ketch dat young man en kill him 'fo' he kin git acrost de river wid Miss Sophia. I reck'n dey's gwyne to be mighty rough times."

“Buck went off ’thout waking me up.”

“Well I reckon he *did!* Dey warn’t gwyne to mix you up in it. Mars Buck he loaded up his gun en ’lowed he’s gwyne to fetch home a Shepherdson or bust. Well, dey’ll be plenty un ’m dah, I reckon, en you bet you he’ll fetch one ef he gits a chanst.”

I took up the river road as hard as I could put. By-and-by I begin to hear guns a good ways off. When I come in sight of the log store and the wood-pile where the steamboats lands, I worked along under the trees and brush till I got to a good place, and then I clumb up into the forks of a cottonwood that was out of reach, and watched. There was a wood-rank²⁰ four foot high, a little ways in front of the tree, and first I was going to hide behind that; but maybe it was luckier I didn’t.

There was four or five men cavorting around on their horses in the open place before the log store, cussing and yelling, and trying to get at a couple of young chaps that was behind the wood-rank alongside of the steamboat landing—but they couldn’t come it. Every time one of them showed himself on the river side of the wood-pile he got shot at. The two boys was squatting back to back behind the pile, so they could watch both ways¹⁷.

By-and-by the men stopped cavorting around and yelling. They started riding towards the store; then up gets one of the boys, draws a steady bead over the wood-rank, and drops one of them out of his saddle. All the men jumped off of their horses and grabbed the hurt one and started to carry him to the store; and that minute the two boys started on the run. They got half-

way to the tree I was in before the men noticed. Then the men see them, and jumped on their horses and took out after them. They gained on the boys, but it didn't do no good, the boys had too good a start; they got to the wood-pile that was in front of my tree, and slipped in behind it, and so they had the bulge^{e6} on the men again. One of the boys was Buck, and the other was a slim young chap about nineteen years old.

The men ripped around awhile, and then rode away. As soon as they was out of sight, I sung out to Buck and told him. He didn't know what to make of my voice coming out of the tree, at first. He was awful surprised. He told me to watch out sharp and let him know when the men come in sight again; said they was up to some devilment or other—wouldn't be gone long. I wished I was out of that tree, but I dasn't come down. Buck begun to cry and rip, and 'lowed that him and his cousin Joe (that was the other young chap) would make up for this day, yet. He said his father and his two brothers was killed, and two or three of the enemy. Said the Shepherdsons laid for them, in ambush. Buck said his father and brothers ought to waited for their relations—the Shepherdsons was too strong for them. I asked him what was become of young Harney and Miss Sophia. He said they'd got across the river and was safe. I was glad of that; but the way Buck did take on because he didn't manage to kill Harney that day he shot at him—I hain't ever heard anything like it.

All of a sudden, bang! bang! bang! goes three or four guns—the men had slipped around through the woods and come in from behind without their horses! The boys jumped for the river—both of them hurt—and as they swum down the current the men run along the

bank shooting at them and singing out, "Kill them, kill them!" It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree. I ain't agoing to tell *all* that happened—it would make me sick again if I was to do that. I wished I hadn't ever come ashore that night, to see such things. I ain't ever going to get shut of them—lots of times I dream about them.

I staid in the tree till it begun to get dark, afraid to come down. Sometimes I heard guns away off in the woods; and twice I seen little gangs of men gallop past the log store with guns; so I reckoned the trouble was still agoing on. I was mighty down-hearted; so I made up my mind I wouldn't ever go anear that house again, because I reckoned I was to blame, somehow. I judged that that piece of paper meant that Miss Sophia was to meet Harney somewheres at half-past two and run off; and I judged I ought to told her father about that paper and the curious way she acted, and then maybe he would a locked her up and this awful mess wouldn't ever happened.

When I got down out of the tree, I crept along down the river bank a piece, and found the two bodies laying in the edge of the water, and tugged at them till I got them ashore; then I covered up their faces, and got away as quick as I could. I cried a little when I was covering up Buck's face, for he was mighty good to me.

It was just dark, now. I never went near the house, but struck through the woods and made for the swamp. Jim warn't on his island, so I tramped off in a hurry for the crick, and crowded through the willows, red-hot to jump aboard and get out of that awful country—the raft

was gone! My souls, but I was scared! I couldn't get my breath for most a minute. Then I raised a yell. A voice not twenty-five foot from me, says—

“Good lan’! is dat you, honey? Doan’ make no noise.”

It was Jim’s voice—nothing ever sounded so good before. I run along the bank a piece and got aboard, and Jim he grabbed me and hugged me, he was so glad to see me. He says—

“Laws bless you, chile, I ’uz right down sho’ you’s dead agin. Jack’s been heah, he say he reck’n you’s ben shot, kase you didn’ come home no mo’; so I’s jes’ dis minute a startin’ de raf’ down towards de mouf er de crick, so’s to be all ready for to shove out en leave soon as Jack comes agin en tells me for certain you *is* dead. Lawsy, I’s mighty glad to git you back agin, honey.”

I says—

“All right—that’s mighty good; they won’t find me, and they’ll think I’ve been killed, and floated down the river—there’s something up there that’ll help them to think so—so don’t you lose no time, Jim, but just shove off for the big water as fast as ever you can.”

I never felt easy till the raft was two mile below there and out in the middle of the Mississippi. Then we hung up our signal lantern, and judged that we was free and safe once more. I hadn’t had a bite to eat since yesterday; so Jim he got out some corn-dodgers^{e7} and buttermilk, and pork and cabbage, and greens—there ain’t nothing in the world so good, when it’s cooked right—and whilst I eat my supper we talked, and had a

good time. I was powerful glad to get away from the feuds, and so was Jim to get away from the swamp. We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.

Chapter 18

Kolonel Grangerford was 'n jintelman, sien. Deur en deur 'n jintelman—en sy hele gesin saam met hom. Hy was van goeie afkoms, soos hulle sê, en die weduwee Douglas het altyd vertel dat dit vir 'n mens net so belangrik is as vir 'n perd—en ons het almal geweet sy self is een van die dorp se voorste mense. Pa het dit ook gesê, al was hy seker nie veel werd as 'n straatkat nie. Kolonel Grangerford was baie lank en skraal, met donker hare en 'n ligte vel en g'n stuk rooierigheid aan hom nie. Elke móre het hy sy hele maer gesig gladgeskeer, en by't vreeslike smal lippe gehad, en 'n vreeslike smal neus, en vreeslike smal neusgate, en 'n taamlieke lang sterk neus en swaar wenkbroue, en gitswart oë wat so diep in hul kaste gesit het dat dit amper gelyk het asof hy uit 'n grot uitloer na jou toe. Hy't 'n hoë voorkop gehad en sy hare het swart en reguit tot op sy skouers gehang. Sy hande was lank en skraal, en elke liewe dag het hy 'n skoon hemp aangetrek en hom in 'n voile pak klere uitge- vat. Dié was gemaak van wit linne—só wit dat jou oë skoon seerge- kry het net van kyk. Sondae het hy 'n blou swaelstertmanel met koperknope gedra. Gewoonlik het hy 'n mahoniekierie met 'n silwerknop by hom gehad. Daar was g'n aansitterigheid aan hom nie en hy't nooit luidrugtig geword nie. Hy was nou deur en deur goed en gaaf—dit kon mens sommer voel, en daarom het dit mens vertrouwe in hom gegee. Partykeer het hy geglimlag en dit het mens goed laat voel net om dit te sien; maar as hy hom die slag opruk soos 'n vlagpaal en daar begin weerlig onder sy wenkbroue blits, dan wou jy heel eerste in 'n boom klim en eers daarná uitvind wat eintlik aan die gang is. Hy't nooit nodig gehad om iemand aan te spreek oor sy maniere nie, want almal het hulle goed gedra as hy by was. Almal het ook daarvan gehou dat hy by is; want hy was byna altyd sonskyn—ek bedoel nou: hy't mens laat *voel* of dit sonskyn is. As hy die slag in 'n wolk wegraak, dan was dit 'n halfminuut lank sommer sleg donker—maar dit was ook genoeg, want daarná sou daar 'n hele week lank nie weer iets verkeerd loop nie.

Wanneer hy en die ou tante smórens uit hul kamer kom, dan staan die hele gesin om more te sê en gaan eers weer sit nadat hulle twee gaan sit het.

Daarna loop Tom en Bob na die buffet waar die wyn- kraffies staan, meng 'n glas bitterwyn en bring dit vir hom. Dié hou hy in sy hand tot Tom en Bob s'n ook gemeng is. Dan buig hulle en sê: „Tot u diens, meneer en mevrou.” En hulle twee buig net so effen-effentjies en sê dankie en aldrie drink saam. En daarna gooi Bob en Tom 'n lepelkje water oor die suiker en die bietjie whisky of appelbrandewyn wat onder in hulle glase oorskiet, en gee dit vir my en Buck, en dan drink ons ook op die oumense se gesond- heid.

Bob was die oudste; dan kom Tom. Lang, mooi manne met baie breë skouers en bruingebrande gesigte en lang swart hare en swart oë. Hulle't ook van kop tot toon wit linneklere aangetrek, nes die ou- baas, en breë panamahoede opgehad.

Dan was daar juffrou Charlotte: sy was vyf-en-twintig en lank en trots en deftig, maar baie lief daarby—as sy nie omgekrap was nie— maar as sy die slag omgeëllie was, dan't sy jou aangekyk met 'n kyk wat jou skoon kon laat verlep, nes haar pa se kyk. Sy was pragtig. Haar suster, juffrou Sophia, ook, maar háár soort mooi was anders. Sy was so sag en lief soos 'n duif, en sy was net twintig.

Elkeen het sy eie slaaf gehad om hom te bedien—Buck inkluis. Mý slaaf het dit lekker gehad, want ek was nie daaraan gewoond dat iemand iets vir my doen nie; maar Buck s'n was gewoonlik aan die rondraf.

Dis nou al die mense in die gesin, maar vroeër was daar meer: drie seuns, wat gesneuwel het, en Emmeline wat dood is.

Die oubaas het 'n hele spul plase gehad, en meer as 'n honderd negerslawe. Party slae het daar sommer 'n hele norring mense te perd opgedaag, tien of vyftien myl ver, en dan vyf of ses dae daar oorgestaan en gekerjakkter op en langs die rivier, bedags uitstappies en picknieks in die bosse gehou, en saans danspartye in die huis. Die gaste was gewoonlik familie van die Grangerfords. Die mans het gewere saamgebring. Dit was nou sommer 'n lekker sous hoge mense, dit kan julle my glo.

Daar was nog 'n ander klomp voorste mense in die buurt—vyf of ses gesinne van hulle: die Shepherdsons. Hulle was net so hoog en smaart en ryk en deftig as die Grangerfords. Die Shepherdsons en die Grangerfords het dieselfde landingsplek van die stoomboot ge- bruik, so 'n twee myl bokant die huis; partykeers het ek dus saam met 'n klomp van ons mense soontoe gegaan en dan 'n klomp Shepherdsons daar op hulle mooi perde gesien.

Eendag was ek en Buck aan die jag tussen die bosse toe ons 'n perd hoor aankom.

„Gou!” roep hy. „Maak dat jy in die bosse kom!”

Ons maak so, en loer toe tussen die blare uit. Kort daarna kom 'n deftige jong man al in die pad afgegalop. Hy't so 'n lekker sit op sy perd en lyk nes 'n soldaat. Sy geweer hou hy dwars oor die saalboom. Ek het horn tevore al gesien. Hy was jong Harney Shepherdson. Toe hoor ek net Buck se geweer hier teen my oor lostrek en Harney se hoed tuimel van sy kop af. Daar en dan gryp hy sy geweer en ry pylreguit na die plek waar ons weggryp. Maar ons

wag g'n oomblik langer nie. Ons begin tussen die bosse inhol. Die bosse was nie danig ruig nie en ek kon dus oor my skouer loer om te koes as die koeël kom; twee keer sien ek hoe Harney met sy geweer korrel vat op Buck. Maar toe ry hy weer terug nes hy gekom het—seker om sy hoed te loop haal; ek kon nie sien nie. Ons het een stryk deur gehol tot by die huis. 'n Oomblik lank het die oubaas se oe gevlam—maar ek dink dit was hoofsaaklik van genot. Toe word sy gesig weer glad en hy sê so half paaierig:

„Ek hou nie van so 'n skietery agter 'n bos uit nie. Hoekom het jy nie oop in die pad gaan staan nie, my seun?”

„Maar die Shepherdsons doen dit nooit, Pa. Hulle vang mens altyd as jy dit nie verwag nie.”

Juffrou Charlotte hou haar kop soos 'n koningin in die lug die hele tyd terwyl Buck met sy storie besig is, en haar neusgate rek en haar oë blits. Die twee jongmans lyk ook dreigend, maar hulle sê niks. Juffrou Sophia word doodsbлек, maar sy kry weer haar gewone kleur terug toe sy hoor dat die man nie seergekry het nie.

Toe ek en Buck eindelijk weer alleen by die mielikrippe onder die borne kom, vra ek vir hom: „Wou jy hom doodgeskiet het, Buck?” „Natuurlik.”

„Wat het hy dan vir jou gedoen?”

„Hy? Niks.”

„Nou hoekom wou jy hom dan doodmaak?”

„Sommer. Dis oor die vete.”

„Wat vir 'n ding is 'n vete?”

„My goeiste, waar't jý grootgeword? Weet jy nie wat 'n vete is nie?”

„Nog nooit daarvan gehoor nie. Vertel vir my.”

„Wel,” sê Buck. „Met 'n vete staan die saak só: 'n man kry skoor met 'n ander man en hy maak hom dood. Dan maak die ander man se broer weer vir hóm dood. En daarna soek al die broers wat daar nog aan weerskante oorbly, mekaar se bloed. Daarna kom die *neefs* aan die beurt. En as daar op die ou end niemand meer oorbly om dood te maak nie, dan's die vete verby. Maar dis 'n stadige affêre. Dit kos tyd.”

„Is die een nou al lank aan die gang?”

„Ek *skat* dit het sowat dertig jaar gelede al begin. Daar was moeilikheid oor iets en toe 'n hofsak; en die saak is uitgewys teen een van die mense—en toe loop skiet hy die man wat die saak gewen het. Wat kon hy anders doen? Enigiemand sou so maak.”

„Waaroor het die stryery gegaan, Buck—grond?”

„Ek skat so. Weet nie.”

„En wie't die skietery begin? Was dit 'n Grangerford of 'n Shepherdson?”

„My magtie, hoe moet *ek* weet? Dis mos lank gelede.”

„Weet niemand?”

„O ja, Pa weet, dink ek; en 'n paar van die ander oumense ook— maar hulle weet nie meer waaroor die stryery begin het nie.”

„Is daar al baie doodgeskiet, Buck?”

„Ja. Sommer ’n hele rits begrafnisse. Maar hulle maak mekaar nie altyd dood nie. Pa’t ’n hele paar lopers in hóm, maar hy gee nie om nie, want hy weeg in elk geval maar lig. Bob is ’n slag sleggerig met ’n mes gesteeke, en Tom het ook een of twee keer seergekry.”

„Is enigiemand al vanjaar doodgemaak, Buck?”

„Ja. Ons het een gekry en hulle een. So ’n drie maande gelede het my neef Bud—hy’s veertien—aan die oorkant van die rivier tussen die bosse gery. Hy’t g’n wapen by hom gehad nie—dit was nou sommer malligheid—en toe hoor hy perdepote agter hom aankom. Hy kyk om en gewaar ou Kaalkop Shepherdson geweer in die hand aanstorm, met sy wit hare wild in die wind. In plaas van dadelik af te spring en die hasepad te kies tussen die bosse in, besluit Bud toe om onder die oubaas te probeer uitgalop. Daar spring hulle toe weg en dit jaag dat dit bars, vyf myl ver of nog verder, en die oubaas wen die hele tyd veld. Uiteindelik sien Bud hy gaan dit nie maak nie. Hy pluk toe sy perd in en swaai om sodat hy die skote van voor kan kry, sien; en die oubaas ry tot by hom en skiet hom plat. Maar hy’t nie veel tyd gehad om bly te voel nie, want binne ’n week het ons kêrels hóm toe weer omgeklits.”

„Ek dink daardie oubaas was ’n vervlakste lafaard, Buck.”

„En ek dink hy was *nie*. Nog nooit! Daar’s g’n lafaard tussen al daardie Shepherdsons nie—nie één nie. En daar’s ook nie lafaards tussen die Grangerfords nie. Goeiste, man: eendag het daardie einste oubaas ’n halfuur lank stokalleen teen drie Grangerfords geveg en as oorwinnaar daar weggery. Hulle was almal te perd. Hy’t afgespring en agter ’n kleinerige houthoop ingespring en gesorg dat sy perd voor hom bly om die koeëls af te keer. Maar die Grangerfords het op hulle perde gebly en al om die oubaas bly jaag en hom heeltyd ge- peper; en hy’t maar teruggepeper. Hy en sy perd het maar altwee sleg gelyk toe hulle by die huis aankom; altwee was gewond en kruppel. Maar wat, die Grangerfords moes huis toe *gebring* word: een was dood, en nog een het die volgende dag beswyk. Nee boeta, as ’n man op soek is na ’n lafaard, moet jy nie jou tyd tussen die Shepherdsons loop mors nie. Jy sal hom net nie daar *kry* nie.”

Die volgende Sondag is ons almal kerk toe, so ’n drie myl ver, en almal te perd. Die mans het hulle gewere saamgeneem—Buck ook— en dit tussen hulle knieë vasgeknyp of langs hulle teen die muur laat staan. Die Shepherdsons het ook so gemaak. Dit was maar ’n dood- ordinêre ou preek oor broederliefde en sulke twak; maar almal het gesê dit was nou rêrig ’n mooi preek en op pad huis toe het hulle die hele tyd daaroor gesels. Hulle het soveel te klets gehad oor geloof, en goeie werke, en vrye genade, prevoordinges-dessit-nasie en goed, dat dit een van die kwaaieste Sondae was wat ek in ’n lang tyd belewe het.

So ’n uur na ete was almal aan die dut, party in hulle stoele en ander in hulle kamers, en dit het bitterlik vervelig begin raak. Buck het saam met ’n hond daar op die gras in die son gelê en slaap. Ek het maar opgegaan na ons kamer toe en besluit om ook ’n uiltjie te knip. Toe ek daar kom, staan die

lieuwe juffrou Sophia op haar drumpel net langs ons kamer, en sy neem my in haar kamer in en maak die deur suutjies toe; toe vra sy of ek van haar hou, en ek sê ja, en sy vra of ek iets vir haar sal doen en vir niemand daarvan sal vertel nie, en ek sê ja. Sy sê sy't haar Testament in die kerk vergeet, op haar sitplek tussen twee ander boeke, en nou wou sy hê ek moes saggies uitglip en dit gaan haal en vir niemand daarvan sê nie. Ek het maar ingewillig. Toe's ek by die huis uit en af in die pad. In die kerk was daar g'n sterfing nie, net 'n vark of twee, want daar was g'n slot aan die deur nie en varke hou van so 'n growwe plankvloer in die somer, want dis lekker koel. Julie kan maar oplê: mense gaan net kerk toe omdat hulle moet; maar met 'n vark is dit anders.

So by myselfers het ek begin dink daar's darem êrens 'n skroef los —dis g'n natuurlik dat 'n meisiekind so begaan is oor 'n Nuwe Testamentjie nie. Ek gee die boek so 'n skud en daar val 'n papiertjie uit. *Half drie* staan daar in potlood op geskryf Ek snuffel die hele ding deur, maar daar was niks anders nie. Dáárvan kon ek g'n kop of stert uitmaak nie, dus het ek die papiertjie maar weer in die boek teruggeskuif; en toe ek weer op die boonste verdieping van die huis terugkom, staan juffrou Sophia vir my op haar drumpel en inwag. Sy trek my in die kamer in en maak die deur toe; en toe begin sy die Testament deursoek tot sy die papiertjie kry. Sy lyk sommer baie in haar skik toe sy dit lees, en voor ek mooi weet waar ek is, kry sy my beet en druk my teen haar vas en sê ek is die soetste seun in die hele wêreld en nou moet ek asseblief vir niemand vertel nie. 'n Rukkie lank was sy bloedrooi in die gesig en haar oë was die ene lig, sodat sy sommer deksels mooi gelyk het. Ek was skoon verbaas oor die hele affêre en toe ek eindelijk my asem terugkry, vra ek haar wat se papier dit dan eintlik was. Het ek dit gelees? wil sy weet, en ek sê nee. Toe vra sy of ek handskrif kan lees, maar ek sê nee, net drukskrif. En toe sê sy die papier is sommer niks—net 'n boekmerkie om haar plek te hou; en nou kan ek gerus maar weer loop speel.

Ek het koers gekry rivier toe en al die tyd oor die affêre bly nadink. Na 'n rukkie gewaar ek dat my slaaf al agter my aankom. Net toe die huis agter die borne verdwyn, loer hy 'n slag oor sy skouer en kom dan nader gehardloop.

„Baas Jors,” sê hy. „Kom bietjie saam met my hier na die moeras toe, dan wys ek jou 'n hele trop waterslange.”

Dis snaaks, dink ek: gister het hy dieselfde ding gesê. Hy behoort tog te weet mens is nie so danig oor waterslange dat jy hulle aspris loop sóék nie. Wat sou hy in die mou voer?

„Nou goed,” sê ek dus maar. „Loop jy vooruit.”

So 'n halfmyl ver volg ek horn. Toe swenk hy in die moeras in en ons waad nog 'n goeie halfmyl enkeldiep verder. Daar kom ons by 'n stukkie droë grond dig begroei met bosse en rankgoed.

„Loer daar in,” beduie hy. „Net so 'n klein entjie, baas Jors. Dis waar hulle is. Ek het hulle al gesien—ek hoef nie weer te kyk nie.” Toe begin hy sloop-sloop aanstryk, vort tussen die borne in. Ek begin daar tussen die

struikgewas inkruipe en kom op 'n ooptetjie af wat so groot soos 'n slaapkamer is, met rankplante rondom. Daar in die middel lê iemand en slaap—my eie ou Jim!

Ek maak horn dadelik wakker en dink hy gaan darem nou alte verras wees om my te sien, maar nee. Hy huil amper van blydschap, maar verras is hy glad nie. Hy vertel my toe hy't daardie aand al agter my aangeswem en my elke slag hoor roep, maar hy't dit nie gewaag om te antwoord nie, want sê nou iemand sleep hóm daaruit en maak hom weer 'n slaaf?

„Ekket bietjie seergekry,” sê hy. „Toe kon ek nie so danig vinnig swem nie. Op die end was ek 'n hele ent agter jou. Nou, toe ek op die wal ytklim, toe dag ek ek sal jou gou-gou inhaal sonder om te skrou. Maar toe siet ek die hys en ek beginne stadiger te loop. Ek kon nie mooi hoor wat hulle vir jou sê nie—ek was te bang vir die honne om nader te gaan—maar toe dit weer stil wore, het ek geweet jy's innie hys, en toe's ek maar trug die bosse in om te wag lat dit lig wore. Vroe-vroe die volgende móre het 'n klompie slawe op pad landerye toe my gekry en my hier na die plek toe gebring waar die honne nie my spoor deur die water sou kry nie. Elke aand bring hulle vir my kos en vertel vir my hoe dit met jou saam gaan.”

„Maar hoekom het jy nie vroeër al vir Jack gesê om my te bring nie, Jim?”

„Dit sou tog nie help om jou te pla voor ons iets kon *doen* nie. Maar nou's dit orraait. Ek het 'n klomp potte en panne en kos ge-koop elke slag sos ek 'n kans gekry het; en snags het ek die vlot heeldemaak..

„Watter vlot, Jim?”

„Ons eie ou vlot.”

„Wil jy vir my sê ons ou vlot is nie fyn en flenters gebreek nie ?” „Aikóna. Bietjie opgesmêns aan die een kant, maar nowerster groot skade nie. Net ons goeters het amper alles geverloor. As ons nie so diep moes duik en so ver onner die water laans moes swem nie, en dit wassie so donker nie, en ons wassie so vrekbang en sulke pam- poenkoppe nie, dan sou ons die vlot gesiet het. Maar's ok maar goed ons hettie, want nou's hy weer opgefiëks, splinternuut, en ons het 'n hele spul nuwe goed ok plaas van diés wat geverloor het.”

„Maar waar't jy dan weer die vlot in die hande gekry? Het jy horn gaanvoorlê?”

„Hoe wil jy hê moet ek hom gaan voorlê as ek hier innie bos sit? Nee, 'n paar vannie slawe het hom gekry—hy't teen 'n paal vasge-drywe. Toe't hulle hom in 'n holtetjie onder die wilgers kom weg-steek en hulle't so gestry oor wie s'n dit nou eintlik is, lat ek gou-gou daarvan uitgevinne het. Toe los ek die hele saak op, want ek sê vir hulle dis g'n hulle s'n nie, dis joune en myne; en ek vra vir hulle of hulle 'n jong witman se goed wil loop vaslê en slae kry daarvoor ? Toe gee ek vir elkeen tien sente en daarmee was hulle dood in hulle skik. Toe wens hulle net daar wil nóg vlotte aankom solat hulle weer kan ryk wore. Hulle's baie goed vir my, die klomp slawe. Hulle sal enig- iets

vir my doen, sonner lat ek hulle tweemaal vra. Daai Jack is 'n baie goeie ou en hy't 'n kop op sy lyf."

„Hy het, ja. Hy't my nooit gesê jy's hier nie: net gesê ek moet kom, hy wil vir my gaan waterslange wys. Wat ook al gebeur, dit sal nou nie sý skuld wees nie. Hy kan net sê hy't ons nooit hier bymekaar gesien nie—en dit sal die waarheid wees."

Van die volgende dag wil ek nie veel vertel nie. Ek dink ek kan kortpad kies. Ek het teen dagbreek wakker geword en was net van plan om om te draai en verder te slaap, toe ek agterkom hoe doodstil alles is—asof daar niemand aan die roer was nie. Dit was nie hoe dit gewoonlik was nie. Toe gewaar ek dat Buck weg is. Verwonderd staan ek op en gaan ondertoe—g'n sterfling nie; alles is morsdood- stil. Buite ook. Wat op aarde beteken dit? wonder ek. Toe, daar onder by die houthoop, loop ek vir Jack raak.

„Wat gaan hier aan ?" vra ek.

„Weet jy dan nie, baas Jors ?"

„Nee," sê ek. „Ek weet nie."

„Nou ja: juffrou Sophia het weggehol, sowaar. Sy't vannag weg- gehol, niemand weet presies wanneer nie. En sy't loop trou met daai jong Harney Shepherdson, jy ken hom mos. In elk geval, dis wat hulle rekena. Die familie het dit so 'n halfuur trug uitgevinne—dalk 'n rapsie vroeër nog. Toe't hulle g'n oomblik geversym nie, dit sê ek jou. Jy't nog nooit so 'n gewoel van gewere en pêre gesien nie! Die vroumense is vort om hulle anner familie te loop opklop, en oubaas Saul en die seuns is met die rivierpad op om die kêrel te probeer vang en hom dood te skiet voor hy saam met juffrou Sophia die rivier oor- steek. Ek dink daar lê 'n groot gemors voor."

„Buck is saam sonder om my wakker te maak."

„Ek skat so, ja. Hulle wou nie hê jy moet ok innie ding beland nie. Klebaas Buck het sy geweer gelaai en gesweer hy gaat vandag 'n Shepherdson trugbring, buig of bars. Ek skat daar gaat 'n hele klomp van hulle daar wees en as hy net 'n kansie kry, dink ek hy gaat sy man kry."

Ek nael toe daar in die rivierpad op so vinnig as wat my bene my kan dra en na 'n rukkie begin ek geweerskote in die verte hoor. Toe ek naby die houtwinkeltjie en die hoop vuurmaakhout kom waar die stoomboot land, sluip ek al tussen die struikgewas deur nader totdat ek 'n goeie plek kry, klouter daar tot hoog in 'n katoenbos se mik, buite bereik, en sit daarvandaan die wêreld en beskou. 'n Entjie van die boom af was daar 'n paalheining van sowat vier voet hoog: eers wou ek dáár gaan wegkruip, maar dalk was dit maar goed dat ek nie het nie.

Op die oopte voor die winkel was daar vier of vyf mans op steie- rende perde aan't skreeu en vloek, besig om 'n paar jong outjies in die hande te kry wat agter 'n paalheining langs die landingsplek wegkruip. Maar hulle kon dit net nie regkry nie. Elke slag as een dit aan die rivierkant van die houthoop gewaag het, is daar op hom geskiet. Die twee seuns het rug aan rug daar agter die hoop gesit sodat hulle in albei rigtings kon kyk.

Na 'n ruk het die mans opgehou met rondtrippel en skree, en in die rigting van die winkel begin ry. Net toe staan een van die seuns op, vat sekuur dooierus oor die houtheining en skiet een man uit die saal uit. Al die ander mans spring van hulle perde af, tel die gewonde op en begin hom na die winkel toe dra. Terwyl hulle daarmee besig is, laat spaander die twee seuns agter die heining uit. Hulle is halfpad na my boom toe voordat die mans dit agterkom. Dadelik spring die mans weer op hulle perde en sit die knape agterna. Hulle wen taamlik vinnig veld, maar dis pure verniet want die twee seuns is al te ver voor. Hulle wip agter die heining hier kort voor my boom in en brand weer los op die mans. Een van die twee seuns is Buck; die ander een is 'n skraal outjie van sowat negentien.

Die mans trippel nog 'n ruk lank heen en weer, dan ry hulle maar weg. Net toe hulle weg is, roep ek na Buck om hom dit te sê. Eers kon hy net nie agterkom waar my stem vandaan kom, daar uit die boom uit nie. Hy was doodverbaas en het my gevra om goed dop te hou en hulle dadelik te waarsku nes die mans weer in sig kom. Hulle't glo die een of ander duiwelstreek in die skild gevoer en sou sommer gou- gou weer terugkom. Ek het gewens ek kon daar uit die boom uit kom, maar ek durf dit nie waag om af te klim nie.

Buck het begin roep en te kere gaan, en gesweer hy en sy neef Joe (die outjie by hom) sou nog dié dag se gebeure wreek. Sy pa en sy twee broers was doodgeskiet, en twee of drie van die vyand ook. Die Shepherdsons het hulle glo in 'n hinderlaag gelok. Buck het gesê sy pa en broers moes gewag het dat hulle ander familie eers opdaag, die Shepherdsons was te sterk vir hulle. Ek wou weet wat van jong Harney en juffrou Sophia geword het. Hulle het glo veilig die rivier oorgesteek en weggekom. Ek was bly daaroor, maar hene, hét die Buck tog te kere gegaan omdat hy nie destyds daarin geslaag het om Harney dood te skiet nie! Ek het nog nooit sowat gehoor nie.

Skielik knal daar drie, vier geweerskote boem! boem! boem! Die mans het al met die bosse langs gesluip en was nou besig om sonder hulle perde van agter af aan te kom! Die seuns laat dadelik vat rivier toe—altwee van hulle was gewond—en terwyl hulle al met die stroom af swem, hardloop die mans op die wal langs en skree: „Maak hulle dood! Maak hulle dood!” Dit het my so naars laat voel dat ek amper uit die boom uit geval het. Ek gaan maar nie alles vertel van wat daardie dag nog gebeur het nie—dit sal my van voor af mislik maak. Ek het gewens dat ek nooit daardie nag aan wal gekom het nie: dan sou ek nie sulke dinge hoef te gesien het nie. Ek sal dit nooit vergeet nie. Baie kere droom ek nog daarvan.

Ek het tot skemer daar in die boom bly sit, te bang om af te klim. Af en toe het ek geweerskote verlangs in die bosse gehoor; en twee keer het ek mans met gewere by die houtwinkel sien verbygalop. Die gedoente was dus nog steeds aan die gang. Ek het bitter mistroostig gevoel en besluit om nooit weer náby daardie huis te kom nie, want ek het ál gedink dat dit op die een of ander manier eintlik my skuld was. Daardie stukkie papier het seker bedoel dat juffrou Sophia vir Harney om halfdrie êrens mocs ontmoet om weg te hoi; en

dalk moes ek maar liefers haar pa daarvan vertel het, en van die snaakse manier waarop sy opgetree het—dan't hy haar dalk opgesluit en dan sou dié nare gemors nooit plaasgevind het nie.

Toe ek uiteindelik uit die boom uit klim, het ek 'n ent langs die rivier afgesluip en die twee lyke daar aan die waterkant gekry. Ek het hulle uitgesleep wal toe, hulle gesigte toegegooi en gemaak dat ek daar wegkom so vinnig as ek kan. Ek het 'n bietjie gehuil toe ek Buck se gesig toemaak, want hy was alte goed vir my.

Teen die tyd was dit net mooi donker. Ek het gesorg dat ek ver van die huis af bly en al met die bosse langs hou, reguit moeras toe. Jim was nie op sy eilandjie nie, dus is ek haastig daarvandaan na die inhammetjie toe. Ek het kwaai deur die wilgertakke gebars, oorhaas- tig om aan boord te gaan en weg te kom van dié aaklige plek af. Maar die vlot was weg! Hemel, maar het ek geskrik! 'n Minuut lank kon ek nie asem kry nie. Toe gee ek 'n harde skreeu. En skaars vyf-en- twintig voet van my af antwoord 'n stem:

„Goeiste, issit jy, Huck? Moenie so 'n lawaai maak nie!”

Dit was Jim se stem—en dit het nog nooit so mooi geklink nie! Ek het 'n entjie teen die wal af gehardloop en op die vlot gespring. Sommer net daar kry Jim my beet en omhels my van pure blydschap.

„Huck tog,” sê hy. „Die Liewenheertjie seen vir jou! Ek was dood- seker jy's weer dood. Jack was hier en hy't gesê hy dink jy's doodge- skiet want jy't nie weer hys toe gekom nie. En ek was nou net op pad om die vlot doer na die bek van die inhammetjie toe te neem om maar te roei nes Jack trugkom om vir seker te sê jy's dood. Ai, ai, ek is tog te bly jy's weer trug, jong!”

„Mooi,” sê ek. „Dis uitstekend. Hulle sal my nou nie kry nie, want hulle sal dink ek is dood en ek het afgedryf—daar's iets daarbo wat hulle sal rede gee om so te dink. Nou toe, Jim, moenie nog tyd mors nie. Laat ons in die oop water kom so gou as wat jy kan.”

Eers toe die vlot 'n goeie twee myl daarvandaan was, in die middel van die breë Mississippi, kon ek weer asem skep. Toe het ons ons seinlantern opgehang en gereken dat ons eindelijk weer vry en veilig was. Ek het die vorige dag laas geëet, dus het Jim mieliebroodjies en karringmelk en varkveis en kool en groente uitgehaal—dis die lekkerste kos op aarde as dit net reg voorberei is—en terwyl ek sit en eet, gesels ons aanmekaar en geniet die lewe. Ek was alte bly dat ek nou weg was van die vetes af, en Jim was bly om uit die moeras uit te kom. Saam-saam het ons besluit dat 'n vlot tog maar die lekkerste ou huis van almal was. Op ander plekke voel mens altyd vasgekeer en bedompig, maar nie op 'n vlot nie. Nee wat, op 'n vlot voel mens alte heerlik vry en gemaklik en gerieflik.

SECTION 19

Two or three days and nights went by; I reckon I might say they swum by, they slid along so quiet and smooth and lovely. Here is the way we put in the time. It was a monstrous big river down there—sometimes a mile and a half wide; we run nights, and laid up and hid daytimes; soon as night was most gone, we stopped navigating and tied up—nearly always in the dead water under a tow-head; and then cut young cotton-woods and willows and hid the raft with them. Then we set out the lines. Next we slid into the river and had a swim, so as to freshen up and cool off; then we set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about knee deep, and watched the daylight come. Not a sound, anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bull-frogs a-cluttering, maybe. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t’other side—you couldn’t make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn’t black any more, but gray; you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away—trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks—rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaming; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there’s a snag there in a swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and

the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, being a wood-yard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers; but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars^{e1}, and such, and they do get pretty rank; and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it!

A little smoke couldn't be noticed, now, so we would take some fish off of the lines, and cook up a hot breakfast. And afterwards we would watch the lonesomeness of the river, and kind of lazy along, and by-and-by lazy off to sleep. Wake up, by-and-by, and look to see what done it, and maybe see a steamboat, coughing along up stream, so far off towards the other side you couldn't tell nothing about her only whether she was stern-wheel or side-wheel; then for about an hour there wouldn't be nothing to hear nor nothing to see—just solid lonesomeness. Next you'd see a raft sliding by, away off yonder, and maybe a galoot on it chopping, because they're most always doing it on a raft; you'd see the ax flash, and come down—you don't hear nothing; you see that ax go up again, and by the time it's above the man's head, then you hear the *k'chunk!*—it had took all that time to come over the water. So we would put in the day, lazying around, listening to the stillness. Once there was a thick fog, and the rafts and things that went by was beating tin pans so the steamboats wouldn't run over them. A

scow or a raft went by so close we could hear them talking and cussing and laughing—heard them plain; but we couldn't see no sign of them; it made you feel crawly, it was like spirits carrying on that way in the air. Jim said he believed it was spirits; but I says:

“No, spirits wouldn't say, ‘dern the dern fog.’”

Soon as it was night, out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle, we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water and talked about all kinds of things—we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us—the new clothes Buck's folks made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides I didn't go much on clothes, nohow.

Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. Yonder was the banks and the islands, across the water; and maybe a spark—which was a candle in a cabin window—and sometimes on the water you could see a spark or two—on a raft or a scow, you know; and maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from one of them crafts. It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky, up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made, or only just happened—Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to *make* so many. Jim said the moon could a *laid* them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against it, because I've seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the stars that fell, too, and

see them streak down. Jim allowed they'd got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.

Once or twice of a night we would see a steamboat slipping along in the dark, and now and then she would belch a whole world of sparks up out of her chimbleys, and they would rain down in the river and look awful pretty; then she would turn a corner and her lights would wink out and her pow-wow shut off and leave the river still again; and by-and-by her waves would get to us, a long time after she was gone, and joggle the raft a bit, and after that you wouldn't hear nothing for you couldn't tell how long, except maybe frogs or something.

After midnight the people on shore went to bed, and then for two or three hours the shores was black—no more sparks in the cabin windows. These sparks was our clock—the first one that showed again meant morning was coming, so we hunted a place to hide and tie up, right away.

One morning about day-break, I found a canoe and crossed over a chute^{e2} to the main shore—it was only two hundred yards—and paddled about a mile up a crick amongst the cypress woods, to see if I couldn't get some berries. Just as I was passing a place where a kind of a cow-path crossed the crick, here comes a couple of men tearing up the path as tight as they could foot it. I thought I was a goner, for whenever anybody was after anybody I judged it was *me*—or maybe Jim. I was about to dig out from there in a hurry, but they was pretty close to me then, and sung out and begged me to save their lives—said they hadn't been doing nothing, and was being chased for it

—said there was men and dogs a-coming. They wanted to jump right in, but I says—

“Don’t you do it. I don’t hear the dogs and horses yet; you’ve got time to crowd through the brush and get up the crick a little ways; then you take to the water and wade down to me and get in—that’ll throw the dogs off the scent.”

They done it, and soon as they was aboard I lit out for our tow-head, and in about five or ten minutes we heard the dogs and the men away off, shouting. We heard them come along towards the crick, but couldn’t see them; they seemed to stop and fool around a while; then, as we got further and further away all the time, we couldn’t hardly hear them at all; by the time we had left a mile of woods behind us and struck the river, everything was quiet, and we paddled over to the tow-head and hid in the cotton-woods and was safe.

One of these fellows was about seventy, or upwards, and had a bald head and very gray whiskers. He had an old battered-up slouch hat on, and a greasy blue woolen shirt, and ragged old blue jeans britches stuffed into his boot tops, and home-knit galluses—no, he only had one. He had an old long-tailed blue jeans coat with slick brass buttons, flung over his arm, and both of them had big fat ratty-looking carpet-bags^{e3}.

The other fellow was about thirty and dressed about as ornery. After breakfast we all laid off and talked, and the first thing that come out was that these chaps didn’t know one another.

“What got you into trouble?” says the baldhead to t’other chap.

“Well, I’d been selling an article to take the tartar off the teeth—and it does take it off, too, and generly the enamel along with it^{e4}—but I staid about one night longer than I ought to, and was just in the act of sliding out when I ran across you on the trail this side of town, and you told me they were coming, and begged me to help you to get off. So I told you I was expecting trouble myself and would scatter out *with* you. That’s the whole yarn—what’s yourn?”

“Well, I’d ben a-runnin’ a little temperance revival thar, ’bout a week, and was the pet of the women-folks, big and little, for I was makin’ it mighty warm for the rummies, I *tell* you, and takin’ as much as five or six dollars a night—ten cents a head, children and niggers free—and business a growin’ all the time; when somehow or another a little report got around, last night, that I had a way of puttin’ in my time with a private jug, on the sly. A nigger roused me out this mornin’, and told me the people was getherin’ on the quiet, with their dogs and horses, and they’d be along pretty soon and give me ’bout half an hour’s start, and then run me down, if they could; and if they got me they’d tar and feather me and ride me on a rail, sure. I didn’t wait for no breakfast—I warn’t hungry.”

“Old man,” says the young one, “I reckon we might double-team it together; what do you think?”

“I ain’t undisposed. What’s your line—mainly?”

“Jour printer^{e5}, by trade; do a little in patent medicines; theatre-actor—tragedy, you know; take a turn at mesmerism and phrenology when there’s a chance; teach singing-geography school^{e6} for a change; sling a

lecture, sometimes—oh, I do lots of things—most anything that comes handy, so it ain't work. What's your lay?"

"I've done considerable in the doctoring way in my time. Layin' on o' hands is my best holt—for cancer, and paralysis, and sich things; and I k'n tell a fortune pretty good, when I've got somebody along to find out the facts for me. Preachin's my line, too; and workin' camp-meetin's; and missionaryin' around."

Nobody never said anything for a while; then the young man hove a sigh and says—

"Alas!"

"What 're you alassin' about?" says the baldhead.

"To think I should have lived to be leading such a life, and be degraded down into such company." And he begun to wipe the corner of his eye with a rag.

"Dern your skin, ain't the company good enough for you?" says the baldhead, pretty pert and uppish.

"Yes, it *is* good enough for me; it's as good as I deserve; for who fetched me so low, when I was so high? *I* did myself. I don't blame *you*, gentlemen—far from it; I don't blame anybody. I deserve it all. Let the cold world do its worst; one thing I know—there's a grave somewhere for me. The world may go on just as it's always done, and take everything from me—loved ones, property, everything—but it can't take that. Some day I'll lie down in it and forget it all, and my poor broken heart will be at rest." He went on a-wiping.

“Drot your pore broken heart,” says the baldhead; “what are you heaving your pore broken heart at *us* f’r? We hain’t done nothing.”

“No, I know you haven’t. I ain’t blaming you, gentlemen. I brought myself down—yes, I did it myself. It’s right I should suffer—perfectly right—I don’t make any moan.”

“Brought you down from whar? Whar was you brought down from?”

“Ah, you would not believe me; the world never believes—let it pass—’tis no matter. The secret of my birth—”

“The secret of your birth? Do you mean to say—”

“Gentlemen,” says the young man, very solemn, “I will reveal it to you, for I feel I may have confidence in you. By rights I am a duke!^{e7}”

Jim’s eyes bugged out when he heard that; and I reckon mine did, too. Then the baldhead says: “No! you can’t mean it?”

“Yes. My great-grandfather, eldest son of the Duke of Bridgewater^{e8}, fled to this country about the end of the last century, to breathe the pure air of freedom; married here, and died, leaving a son, his own father dying about the same time. The second son of the late duke seized the title and estates—the infant real duke was ignored. I am the lineal descendant of that infant—I am the rightful Duke of Bridgewater; and here am I, forlorn, torn from my high estate, hunted of men, despised by the cold world, ragged, worn, heart-

broken, and degraded to the companionship of felons on a raft!"

Jim pitied him ever so much, and so did I. We tried to comfort him, but he said it warn't much use, he couldn't be much comforted; said if we was a mind to acknowledge him, that would do him more good than most anything else; so we said we would, if he would tell us how. He said we ought to bow, when we spoke to him, and say "Your Grace," or "My Lord," or "Your Lordship"—and he wouldn't mind it if we called him plain "Bridgewater," which he said was a title, anyway, and not a name; and one of us ought to wait on him at dinner, and do any little thing for him he wanted done.

Well, that was all easy, so we done it. All through dinner Jim stood around and waited on him, and says, "Will yo' Grace have some o' dis, or some o' dat?" and so on, and a body could see it was mighty pleasing to him.

But the old man got pretty silent, by-and-by—didn't have much to say, and didn't look pretty comfortable over all that petting that was going on around that duke. He seemed to have something on his mind. So, along in the afternoon, he says:

"Looky here, Bilgewater^{e9}," he says, "I'm nation sorry for you, but you ain't the only person that's had troubles like that."

"No?"

"No, you ain't. You ain't the only person that's ben snaked down wrongfully out'n a high place."

“Alas!”

“No, you ain’t. You ain’t the only person that’s had a secret of his birth.” And by jings, *he* begins to cry.

“Hold! What do you mean?”

“Bilgewater, kin I trust you?” says the old man, still sort of sobbing.

“To the bitter death!” He took the old man by the hand and squeezed it, and says, “The secret of your being: speak!”

“Bilgewater, I am the late Dauphin!”ⁱ¹⁸

You bet you Jim and me stared, this time. Then the duke says:

“You are what?”

“Yes, my friend, it is too true—your eyes is lookin’ at this very moment on the pore disappeared Dauphin, Looy the Seventeen, son of Looy the Sixteen and Marry Antonette.”

“You! At your age! No! You mean you’re the late Charlemagne^{e10}; you must be six or seven hundred years old, at the very least.”

“Trouble has done it, Bilgewater, trouble has done it; trouble has brung these gray hairs and this premature balditude. Yes, gentlemen, you see before you, in blue jeans and misery, the wanderin’, exiled, trampled-on and sufferin’ rightful King of France.”

Well, he cried and took on so, that me and Jim didn’t

know hardly what to do, we was so sorry—and so glad and proud we'd got him with us, too. So we set in, like we done before with the duke, and tried to comfort *him*. But he said it warn't no use, nothing but to be dead and done with it all could do him any good; though he said it often made him feel easier and better for a while if people treated him according to his rights, and got down on one knee to speak to him, and always called him "Your Majesty," and waited on him first at meals, and didn't set down in his presence till he asked them. So Jim and me set to majestyng him, and doing this and that and t'other for him, and standing up till he told us we might set down. This done him heaps of good, and so he got cheerful and comfortable. But the duke kind of soured on him, and didn't look a bit satisfied with the way things was going; still, the king acted real friendly towards him, and said the duke's great-grandfather and all the other Dukes of Bilgewater was a good deal thought of by *his* father and was allowed to come to the palace considerable; but the duke staid huffy a good while, till by-and-by the king says:

"Like as not we got to be together a blamed long time, on this h-yer raft, Bilgewater, and so what's the use o' your bein' sour? It'll only make things oncomfortable. It ain't my fault I warn't born a duke, it ain't your fault you warn't born a king—so what's the use to worry? Make the best o' things the way you find 'em, says I—that's my motto. This ain't no bad thing that we've struck here—plenty grub and an easy life—come, give us your hand, Duke, and less all be friends."

The duke done it, and Jim and me was pretty glad to see it. It took away all the uncomfortableness, and we

felt mighty good over it, because it would a been a miserable business to have any unfriendliness on the raft; for what you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind towards the others.

It didn't take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn't no kings nor dukes, at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds. But I never said nothing, never let on; kept it to myself; it's the best way; then you don't have no quarrels, and don't get into no trouble. If they wanted us to call them kings and dukes, I hadn't no objections, 'long as it would keep peace in the family; and it warn't no use to tell Jim, so I didn't tell him. If I never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way^{e11}.

Chapter 19

Twee of drie dae en nagte het verbygegaan; verbygeswem, kan ek amper sê, so stil en gladweg en mooi het hulle verbygeglim. Die rivier was verskriklik groot daar—op party plekke 'n myl en 'n half breed. Ons het snags verder gedryf en bedags wegge- kruip; teen dagbreek het ons uit die stroom gedraai en gaan vasmeer, gewoonlik in die dooiwater onderkant'n slonsbank; dan het ons die vlot met jong katoenbosse en wilgerlote toegemaak. Daarna het ons ons lyne uitgehang, en dan in die rivier gespring en 'n bietjie geswem om af te koel en weer vars te voel. Dan het ons kniediep in die water op die sanderige bodem gaan sit en kyk hoe die dag breek. Nêrens 'n geluidjie nie—alles doodstil—asof die hele wêreld aan die slaap was; net hier en daar het 'n brulpadda miskien gekwaak. Die eerste ding wat sigbaar word as mens so oor die water sit en uitkyk, is 'n dowwe- rige streep—die bosse aan die oorkant—verder kan jy niks herken nie. Dan begin daar 'n ligte kol in die lug vorm, en dit begin al blekeriger raak daar rondom, en die rivier begin doer in die verte sagter lyk, nie meer so pikswart nie, maar grys; en ver, ver, kan mens klein donker spikkeltjies sien drywe—handelskuite en goed; en lang swart strepe—vlotte; partykeers kan jy 'n waterwiel hoor knars, of'n

roesemoes van stemme, want dis so stil dat geluide baie ver trek; en naderhand sien jy 'n streep op die water lê, en sommer aan die ge-aardheid van die streep kan jy sien daar moet 'n stomp of iets in die vinnige stroom lê wat die water breek en dit só laat lyk; en dan sien jy hoe die mis opkrul, weg van die rivier af boontoe, en in die ooste word dit rooierig, en die rivier ook; en daar aan die rand van die bosse kan jy 'n houthuisie gewaar, doer op die oorkantste oewer—waarskynlik 'n hoop by 'n saagmeule, en die kullerige mense pak dit mos só dat jy enige plek 'n hond in die hoop kan ingooi; dan kom daar 'n lekker briesie en hy veeg liggies en koel en vars oor jou, en hy dra die geur van die bosse en die blomme; maar partykeers ruik die wind nie so lekker nie, as iemand dalk dooie vis of goed laat rondlê het, en dan stink dit maar; en eindelijk is dit helder dag en alles staan en glimlag in die son en die voëltjies sing vir die vales.

G'n mens sou nou 'n rokie raaksien nie. Daarom het ons dié tyd gekies om 'n paar visse van ons lyne af te haal en ontbyt te kook. Daarna lê en kyk ons maar weer na die rivier se groot allenigheid, en luier daar rond, en raak later weer stilweg aan die dut. Word wakker na 'n ruk, kyk rond om te sien wat jou aandag getrek het, en gewaar miskien 'n stoomboot wat stroom-op proes-proes, so ver aan die oorkant dat jy glad nie kan uitmaak of hy wiele weerskante het of aan die stert nie; dan is dit 'n goeie uur lank weer morsdood verlate en alleen, met niks te hoor nie en niks te sien nie. Naderhand kom daar ver oorkant 'n vlot afgeglip, dalk met 'n jong matroos daarop aan't houtkap—want dit word gewoonlik op 'n vlot gedoen. Jy sien die byl flits soos hy neerkom, maar jy hoor niks; dan sien jy die byl weer lig, en eers as hy bokant die man se kop uit gelig is, hoor jy die *tka!*—so lank neem dit om oor die water te trek. En so't ons die dae deurgebring, rondgeluier, geluister na die stilte. Een keer was daar 'n digte mis en toe't al die vlotte en goed wat verbykom op blikpanne geslaan sodat die stoombote hulle nie moes raakry nie. 'n Skuit of 'n vlot het só naby ons verbygekom dat ons die mense daarop kon hoor swets en lag en gesels—sommer duidelik ook. Maar ons kon niks van hulle te siene kry nie, en dit het mens half kriewelrig laat voel, want dit was nes geeste wat so in die lug te kere gaan. Jim het vas geglo dat dit geeste was, maar ek het gesê:

„Nee. G'n gees sal sê: „Die vervlakste' mis nie!”

Nes dit donker word, het ons dan weer van wal gestee, tot so in die middel van die rivier, en die vlot dan maar laat begaan om af te dry we soos die stroom hom vat. Dan't ons ons pype aangesteek, met ons bene in die water gesit en speel en land en sand aanmekaar gesels. Ons het dag en nag kaal geloop—dis nou as die muskiete dit toege-laai het—want die nuwe klere wat Buck se mense vir my gemaak het, was glad te goed om gemaklik te voel, en ek het buitendien nooit veel sin in klere gehad nie.

Partykeer het ons 'n lang-lang ruk die hele rivier net vir onself gehad. Daar oorkant die water was die oewers en eilande, en af en toe dalk 'n liggie ook—'n kers in 'n houthuisie se venster—en soms 'n lig of wat op die water

ook: op 'n vlot of skuit; en miskien kon mens 'n viool se note of 'n liedjie van een van die ander vaartuie af hoor kom. Dis heerlik om op 'n vlot te woon. Ons het die lug gehad, daar hoog bokant ons, gespikkel met sterre. En baie slae het ons op ons ríxe gelê en opgekyk na hulle en oor hulle gepraat: gewonder of hulle gemáák was en of hulle sommer net gebeur het. Jim het gereken hulle is gemaak, maar ek het gedink hulle het net so gebeur—daar was darem glad te veel van hulle om *gemaak* te word. Jim het gemeen die maan kon hulle dalk *gelê* het. Dit het nogal aanvaarbaar geklink, dus het ek niks daarteen gesê nie, want ek het al gesien dat 'n padda amper net soveel eiers lê, dus kón dit gedoen word. Ons het die ver- skietende sterre ook dopgehou en gesien hoe hulle afstreep deur die lug. Jim het gereken dis dié wat sleg geword het en uit die nes geskop is.

Een of twee keer in die nag sou ons 'n stoomboot in die donkerte sien verbysluip, en partykeer sou daar 'n hele wêreld se vonke uit die skoorstene opspaander en op die rivier neerreën, tog te mooi; dan sou die boot om 'n draai verdwyn, en sy liggies sou-uitknipper en die gedoef van die enjin sou ophou, en dan was die rivier weer stil. Na 'n ruk sou sy golwe by ons aankom, lank ná die boot al weg is, en die vlot 'n bietjie laat dobber; maar dan sou jy weer vir wie weet hoe lank niks hoor nie, behalwe miskien die paddas of iets.

Ná middernag het die mense aan wal gaan slaap; dan was die oewers vir twee of drie uur lank pikdonker, met g'n liggies in hout- huisvensters meer nie. Dié ligte was as't ware ons horlosie. Die eerste een wat sy verskyning maak, beteken dat dit dag word; dan moet ons 'n skuilplek begin soek en sonder versuim gaan vasmeer.

Een oggend het ek omstreeks dagbreek 'n kano raakgeloop en daarmee oor 'n stroomversnelling wal toe geroei (skaars tweehonderd tree ver) en toe 'n myl in 'n sylopie tussen die sipreswoude opgevaar om te sien of ek nie kon bessies kry nie. Net toe ek 'n plek verbysteeek waar 'n soort veepadje oor die stroompie loop, kom daar twee mans in die padjie aange-nael so vinnig as hul bene hulle kan dra. Nou's dit klaarpraat met my, dag ek; want elke slag as ek iemand sien wat iemand anders jaag, dan is ek vas oortuig daarvan dat dit ék is wat gejaag word—of Jim. Ek was net van plan om te maak dat ek haastig daar wegkom, maar hulle was al te ná aan my. En hulle skree vir my dat ek tog hulle lewens moet red. Hulle het niks gedoen nie, sweer hulle, en nou's daar 'n spul mense met honde agter hulle aan net daaroor. Hulle wil ook sommer dadelik inspring, maar ek keer hulle voor.

„Moenie,” sê ek. „Ek hoor nog g'n honde of perde aankom nie. Julie het genoeg tyd om in die bosse in te kruip en 'n entjie sólangs te sluip. Dan kan julle daarbo in die stroompie instap en hier na my toe terugkom—dit sal die honde van die spoor af bring.”

Hulle maak toe ook so en net toe hulle aan boord is, maak ek dat ek wegkom na ons slonsbank toe; skaars vyf of tien minute later hoor ons die honde en die mense in die verte te kere gaan. Ons hoor hulle na die lopies toe aankom, maar kry hulle nie te siene nie; dit lyk of hulle eers stilgehou het om

'n rukkie rond te soek. Soos ons al verder en verder van hulle af weggaan, word die stemme dowwer tot ons naderhand amper niks meer hoor nie; en toe ons 'n myl van die bos- wêreld agter die rug het en weer in die rivier inswaai, is alles doodstil. Ongehinderd roei ons oor na die slonsbank toe en gaan kruip daar tussen die katoenplante weg, veilig.

Een van die mans was seker 'n goeie sewentig of nog ouer, met 'n kaalkop en 'n baie grys bakkebaard. Hy't 'n verslonsde ou flaphoed op sy kop; verder dra hy 'n smerige blou wolhemp, 'n toingrige ou blou kuitbroek wat bo in sy stewels ingesteeek is, en tuisgebreide kouse—of liewer: net één. Oor sy arm dra hy 'n ou vaalblou swael- stertjas met mooi koperknope; albei van hulle het groot, dik, mot- gevrete tasse by hulle.

Die ander kêrel was sowat dertig en omtrent net so oes aangetrek. Ná ontbyt het ons almal aan die gesels geraak. En omtrent die eerste ding wat aan die lig kom, is dat die twee kêrels mekaar van g'n kant af ken nie.

„Hoe het jy in die moeilikheid beland?” vra die pankop aan die ander ou.

„O wel, ek was besig om 'n middel te verkoop wat aanpaksel van mense se tande afhaal. Dit háál dit ook af, maar gewoonlik laat dit die enemmel ook sommer afkom. Ek skat ek het een nag langer oor- gebly as wat ek moes en ek was net besig om my uit die voete te maak toe ek jóú teëkom, daar op die paadjie aan die duskant van die dorp. By jou't ek gehoor hulle is aan die kom, en jy't my toe mos ge- soebat om jou te help wegkom. Ek het jou vertel ek verwag self 'n bietjie moeilikheid, en toe't ek besluit om maar saam met jou weg te hoi. Dis die hele storie. En nou—joune?”

„Ek was besig om 'n matigheidsveldtog daar te hou—nou al 'n week lank, sien. En al die vroumense, klein en groot, wou dood oor my want ek het die wêreld sommer sleg warm gemaak vir die dronk- lappe. Daarby het ek vyf, ses dollar elke aand ingeoes—tien sent stuk, kinders en negers gratis—en die saak was net mooi aan die uit- brei. Toe, gisteraand, begin daar mos 'n storietjie rondgaan dat ek stilletjies in my vrye tyd self maar die elmboog lig. Vanmóre het 'n neger my kom wakker maak en my vertel die mense is besig om in die geheim bymekaar te kom, met honde en perde en al. Oor 'n rukkie sou hulle daar by my aankom. Hulle plan was om my so 'n halfuur voor te gee en my dan agterna te sit; en as hulle my vang, dan teer- en-veer hulle my en dreun my van 'n kant af op. Ek het toe maar nie gewag vir ontbyt nie—ek was nie juis honger nie.”

„Oubaas,” sê die jongerige ou. „Ek dink ons kan dalk probeer saamwerk. Hoe lyk dit?”

„Ek het nie beswaar nie. Wat doen jy nou eintlik graagste?”

„My ambag is eintlik drukwerk. Daarby smous ek bietjie met patente medisyne; en ek is akteur—in tragedies, sien; as ek kans kry, doen ek 'n bietjie oëverblindery en hipnotiseerders; vir afwisseling leer ek skoolkinders sang of aardrykskunde; af en toe timmer ek 'n toespraak aanmekaar. O, daar's baie dinge wat ek kan doen—so te sê enigiets wat opduik, solank dit net nie werk is nie. En jy?”

„Ek het heelwat doktery op my dag gedoen. Ek is op my beste as ek iemand die hande kan oplê—vir kanker of verlamming of sulke dinge; en ek kan nogal goed fortuin vertel, as ek net iemand het om vir my die feite te gaan bymekeer kry. Daarby preek ek graag, en ek reel bidure, en ek doen bietjie sendingwerk hier en daar.”

„’n Ruk lank sê niemand iets nie. Tot die jongman ’n slag sug en sê: „Foei!”

„Wat se gefoei is dit met jou?” vra die pankop.

„Om te dink dat ek die dag moes belewe dat ek op dié manier ’n bestaan sou moes maak—en dit in sulke vernederende geselskap.” En hy begin die hoek van sy oog met ’n flenter afdroog.

„Jy sal jou wat verbeel! Is my geselskap nie goed genoeg vir jou nie?” vra die bleskop sommer behoorlik vies en gekwets.

„Ja, ja, dit is goed genoeg vir my. Dis al wat ek verdien. Want wie se skuld is dit dat ek so laag gedaal het, ek wat so hoog was? Dis my skuld. Nee, menere, ek verwyт julle nie, verre daarvan. Ek verwyт niemand nie. Ek neem al die skuld op my. Laat die koue wêreld nou maar op my uithaal álles wat hy wil. Een ding weet ek: êrens wag daar vir my ’n graf. Die wêreld kan maar voortgaan nes altyd, en alles van my af wegneem—my dierbares, my besittings, alles—maar dit kan niks van my af wegneem nie. Eendag sal ek my gaan neerlê en alles vergeet, en my arme gebroke hart sal sy rus ingaan.” Hy hou maar aan met oë uitvee.

„Loop opsy met jou arme gebroke hart,” sê die pankop. „Vir wat druk jy jou arme gebroke hart in óns keelgate af? *Ons* het daar niks mee te doen nie.”

„Nee, ek weet julle het nie. Ek verwyт julle nie, menere. Ek het myself so laag laat daal—ja, dis my eie skuld. Dis reg dat ek moet ly. Dis heeltemal reg so. Ek klae nie.”

„Waarvandaan het jy miskien gedaal? Waarvandaan, he?”

„Ag, julle sal my tog nie glo nie. Die wêreld glo my nooit. Vergeet dit maar, dit maak nie saak nie. Die geheim van my geboorte . .

„Die geheim van jou geboorte? Wil jy vir my sê . . .”

„Menere,” sê die jongman baie gewigtig. „Ek sal dit aan julle bekend maak, want ek glo ek mag my vertrouwe in julle stel. Ek is in werklikheid ’n hertog.”

Jim se oe spring amper uit sy kop uit toe hy dit hoor; en myne ook, dink ek.

En die bleskop sê: „Nee! Jy bedoel dit tog seker nie ?”

„Ja. My grootjie, die oudste seun van die hertog van Bridgewater, het teen die end van die vorige eeu hiernatoe gevlug om die suiwere lug van ’n vry land in te asem. Hier is hy getroud, hier het hy gesterwe en ’n seun nagelaat. Sy eie vader is omtrent gelyk met hom dood. Die oorlede hertog se tweede seun het beslag gelê op die titel en die eiendomme, en die seun van die ware hertog is oor die hoof gesien. Ek is die direkte afstammeling van daardie seun. Ek is die ware hertog van Bridgewater. En hier sit ek: verlate, weggewerp van

my hoë amp, verjaag deur die mensdom, verag deur die koue wêreld, verflenter, gedaan, my hart gebroke, vemeder tot die geselskap van 'n spul skooiers op 'n vlot."

Jim en ek het altwee bitter jammer vir hom gevoel. Ons het hom probeer troos, maar hy't gesê dit help nie juis nie, want niks kan hom vertrous nie. As ons hom maar liewer net erkentlik wou behandel, het hy gesê, dan sou dit hom die wêreld se goed doen. Dit sou ons graag doen, het ons hom verseker—as hy ons net sê *hoe*. En toe verduidelik hy dat ons behoort te buig as ons met hom praat, en hom moet aan- spreek as „U Edele”, of as „My heer” of as „Edelagbare”; hy sou nie eens omgee as ons hom sommer net prontweg „Bridgewater” noem nie, want dis tog 'n titel en nie 'n naam nie. Daarby behoort een van ons hom aan tafel te bedien en allerhande kleinigheidjies vir hom te doen.

Nou, dit was alles doodmaklik en ons het toe ook so gemaak. Dwarsdeur middagete het Jim bygestaan en hom bedien en kort-kort gevra: „Wil U Edele nie nog iets hiervan of daarvan hê nie?” En mens kon sien hy hou sommer baie daarvan.

Maar so algaande het die ou man al stiller begin word—byna niks gesê nie, en glad nie waffer in sy skik gelyk met al die gediensigheid daar rondom die hertog nie. Dit het ál gelyk asof daar iets swaars op sy gewete rus. En in die loop van die middag kom hy toe daarmee uit:

„Kyk, Bilgewater,” sê hy. „Ek is wraggies jammer vir jou, maar jy's nie die enigste man wat met sulke probleme sit nie.”

„Nie?”

„Nee, jy is nie. Jy's nie die enigste wat verraderlik uit 'n hoë pos uit verkul is nie.”

„Foei!”

„Nee, jy's glad nie die enigste met 'n geheim oor jou geboorte nie.” En toe begin *hy* sowaar huil.

„Wag nou! Wat bedoel jy tog?”

„Bilgewater, kan ek jou vertrou?” vra die oubaas nog half aan't snik.

„Tot die bittere dood toe.” Hy neem die oubaas se hand en druk dit en sê: „Die geheim van jou bestaan: vertel!”

„Bilgewater, ek is die oorlede Dauphin!”

Julie kan julle voorstel hoe my en Jim se oë die slag gerek het.

Toe vra die hertog: „Jy's—wát?”

„Ja, my vriend, dis maar alte waar: jou oë aanskou op hierdie einste oomblik die arme Dauphin wat verdwyn het. Loodwyk die Sewentiende, die seun van Loodwyk die Sestiende en Marie Antoinette.”

„Jy ? En dit op jóú jare? Nooit! Jy bedoel seker eintlik jy's oorlede Karel die Grote. Jy lyk minstens ses- of sewehonderd jaar oud.”

„Dis ellende wat só met my gemaak het, Bilgewater, dis ellende wat so gemaak het. Ellende het my hare so grys gemaak en my kop so ontydig kaal laat word. Ja, menere, in hierdie blou kuitbroek en in hierdie ellende sien julle

die swerwende, verbanne, vernederde, lydende ware Koning van Frankryk.”

Nou ja, hy't so gegrens en te kere gegaan, dat ek en Jim skaars ge- weet het wat om te doen van skone jammerte—en daarby kon ons bars van blydschap en trots dat hy daar by ons was. Toe begin ons hom maar paai en pamperlang soos ons flussies met die hertog gemaak het. Maar niks kon hom troos nie, het hy gesê. Al wat hom sou help, sou wees om te sterwe en weg te kom van alles. Maar dit sou hom darem bietjie beter en gemakliker laat voel as mense hom sou behandel soos dit eintlik hoort, en op die een knie sal val as hulle met hom praat, en hom altyd aanspreek as „U Majesteit” en hom altyd eerste aan tafel bedien, en nie gaan sit voor hy hulle verlof gee nie. Toe begin ek en Jim hom sommer dadelik majesteit van voor tot agter, en ons draf rond om dingetjies vir hom te doen, en ons bly staan tot hy sê ons kan maar sit. Dit het hom sommer baie goed gedoen, en hy't weer opgeruimd en vriendelik begin word. Maar dit was of die hertog bietjie nors geraak het, en hy't glad nie tevrede ge- lyk met die verloop van sake nie. Maar die koning het hóm baie vriendelik behandel en gesê die hertog se oupa en al die ander hertoë van Bilgewater het nog altyd hoog aangeskryf gestaan by sý pa, en hulle het dikwels in die paleis gekom. Maar die hertog het nog nukkerig gebly, tot die koning naderhand sê:

„Kyk, dit lyk of ons sommer 'n hele ruk hier op die vlot gaan saam- woon, Bilgewater. Wat is dus die nut van dikbek wees? Dit sal alles net omkrap. Dis nie my skuld dat ek nie 'n hertog gebore is nie, en dis nie jou skuld dat jy nie 'n koning gebore is nie—hoekom sal ons dan sanik daaroor? Maak die beste van 'n saak soos hy voor jou kom staan, dis my leuse. En dis glad nie so 'n vrot saak dié nie—oor- genoeg om te eet en 'n luilekker lewe. Kom, skud my blad en laat ons almal vriende wees.”

Die hertog het dit gedoen, tot my en Jim se groot vreugde. Dit het al die ongemaklikheid weggeneem en nou was ons hoogs in ons skik, want dit sou maar 'n nare spul gewees het as daar kwaai-vriendskap op die vlot moes kom. Want daar's een ding wat mens bo alles op 'n vlot nodig het, en dis dat almal tevrede is en goed en vriendelik voel teenoor al die ander.

Dit het nie lank geduur voor ek ontdek het dat die twee leuenaars g'n konings of hertoë was nie, maar sommer net boemelaars en skooiers. Maar ek het nooit 'n woord gesê nie en hulle niks laat agterkom nie. Dis maar die beste om so iets vir mens self te hou, dan's daar g'n rusies nie en niemand beland in die sop nie. As hulle wou hê ons moet hulle konings en hertoë noem, goed, ek gee nie om nie, solank dit die vrede bewaar. En om vir Jim te vertel, sou tog niks help nie, dus het ek dit maar vir hom ook stilgehou. Ek het nie baie by my pa geleer nie, maar één ding wel, en dis dat jy net met mense kan klaarkom as jy hulle hul sin gee.

SECTION 20

They asked us considerable many questions; wanted to know what we covered up the raft that way for, and laid by in the day-time instead of running—was Jim a runaway nigger? Says I—

“Goodness sakes, would a runaway nigger run *south*?”

No, they allowed he wouldn't. I had to account for things some way, so I says:

“My folks was living in Pike County, in Missouri, where I was born, and they all died off but me and pa and my brother Ike. Pa, he 'lowed he'd break up and go down and live with Uncle Ben, who's got a little one-horse place on the river, forty-four mile below Orleans. Pa was pretty poor, and had some debts; so when he'd squared up there warn't nothing left but sixteen dollars and our nigger, Jim. That warn't enough to take us fourteen hundred mile, deck passage nor no other way. Well, when the river rose, pa had a streak of luck one day; he ketched this piece of a raft; so we reckoned we'd go down to Orleans on it. Pa's luck didn't hold out; a steamboat run over the forrard corner of the raft, one night, and we all went overboard and dove under the wheel; Jim and me come up, all right, but pa was drunk, and Ike was only four years old, so they never come up no more. Well, for the next day or two we had considerable trouble, because people was always coming out in skiffs and trying to take Jim away from me, saying they believed he was a runaway nigger. We don't run day-times no more, now; nights

they don't bother us."

The duke says—

"Leave me alone to cipher out a way so we can run in the day-time if we want to. I'll think the thing over—I'll invent a plan that'll fix it. We'll let it alone for to-day, because of course we don't want to go by that town yonder in daylight—it mightn't be healthy."

Towards night it begun to darken up and look like rain; the heat lightning was squirting around, low down in the sky, and the leaves was beginning to shiver—it was going to be pretty ugly, it was easy to see that. So the duke and the king went to overhauling our wigwam, to see what the beds was like. My bed was a straw tick—better than Jim's, which was a corn-shuck tick; there's always cobs around about in a shuck tick, and they poke into you and hurt; and when you roll over, the dry shucks sound like you was rolling over in a pile of dead leaves; it makes such a rustling that you wake up. Well, the duke allowed he would take my bed; but the king allowed he wouldn't. He says—

"I should a reckoned the difference in rank would a sejested to you that a corn-shuck bed warn't just fitten for me to sleep on. Your Grace'll take the shuck bed yourself."

Jim and me was in a sweat again, for a minute, being afraid there was going to be some more trouble amongst them; so we was pretty glad when the duke says—

"'Tis my fate to be always ground into the mire under the iron heel of oppression. Misfortune has broken my

once haughty spirit; I yield, I submit; 'tis my fate. I am alone in the world—let me suffer; I can bear it.”

We got away as soon as it was good and dark. The king told us to stand well out towards the middle of the river, and not show a light till we got a long ways below the town. We come in sight of the little bunch of lights by-and-by—that was the town, you know—and slid by, about a half a mile out, all right. When we was three-quarters of a mile below, we hoisted up our signal lantern; and about ten o'clock it come on to rain and blow and thunder and lighten like everything; so the king told us to both stay on watch till the weather got better; then him and the duke crawled into the wigwam and turned in for the night. It was my watch below, till twelve, but I wouldn't a turned in, anyway, if I'd had a bed; because a body don't see such a storm as that every day in the week, not by a long sight. My souls, how the wind did scream along! And every second or two there'd come a glare that lit up the white-caps for a half a mile around, and you'd see the islands looking dusty through the rain, and the trees thrashing around in the wind; then comes a *h-wack!*—bum! bum! bumble-umble-um-bum-bum-bum-bum—and the thunder would go rumbling and grumbling away, and quit—and then *rip* comes another flash and another sockdolager. The waves most washed me off the raft, sometimes, but I hadn't any clothes on, and didn't mind. We didn't have no trouble about snags; the lightning was glaring and flittering around so constant that we could see them plenty soon enough to throw her head this way or that and miss them.

I had the middle watch, you know, but I was pretty sleepy by that time, so Jim he said he would stand the

first half of it for me; he was always mighty good, that way, Jim was. I crawled into the wigwam, but the king and the duke had their legs sprawled around so there warn't no show for me; so I laid outside—I didn't mind the rain, because it was warm, and the waves warn't running so high, now. About two they come up again, though, and Jim was going to call me, but he changed his mind because he reckoned they warn't high enough yet to do any harm; but he was mistaken about that, for pretty soon all of a sudden along comes a regular ripper, and washed me overboard. It most killed Jim a-laughing. He was the easiest nigger to laugh that ever was, anyway.

I took the watch, and Jim he laid down and snored away; and by-and-by the storm let up for good and all; and the first cabin-light that showed, I roused him out and we slid the raft into hiding-quarters for the day.

The king got out an old ratty deck of cards, after breakfast, and him and the duke played seven-up a while, five cents a game. Then they got tired of it, and allowed they would “lay out a campaign,” as they called it. The duke went down into his carpet-bag and fetched up a lot of little printed bills, and read them out loud. One bill said “The celebrated Dr. Armand de Montalban of Paris,” would “lecture on the Science of Phrenology” at such and such a place, on the blank day of blank, at ten cents admission, and “furnish charts of character at twenty-five cents apiece.” The duke said that was *him*. In another bill he was the “world renowned Shakspearean tragedian, Garrick the Younger,²¹ of Drury Lane, London.” In other bills he had a lot of other names and done other wonderful things, like finding water and gold with a “divining rod,”

“dissipating witch-spells,” and so on. By-and-by he says—

“But the histrionic muse is the darling. Have you ever trod the boards, Royalty?”

“No,” says the king.

“You shall, then, before you’re three days older, Fallen Grandeur,” says the duke. “The first good town we come to, we’ll hire a hall and do the sword-fight in Richard III^{e1}. and the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet. How does that strike you?”

“I’m in, up to the hub, for anything that will pay, Bilgewater, but you see I don’t know nothing about play-actn’, and hain’t ever seen much of it. I was too small when pap used to have ’em at the palace. Do you reckon you can learn me?”

“Easy!”

“All right. I’m jist a-freezn’ for something fresh, anyway. Less commence, right away.”

So the duke he told him all about who Romeo was, and who Juliet was, and said he was used to being Romeo, so the king could be Juliet^{e2}.

“But if Juliet’s such a young gal, Duke, my peeled head and my white whiskers is goin’ to look oncommon odd on herⁱ¹⁹, maybe.”

“No, don’t you worry—these country jakes won’t ever think of that. Besides, you know, you’ll be in costume, and that makes all the difference in the world; Juliet’s in a balcony, enjoying the moonlight before she goes

to bed, and she's got on her night-gown and her ruffled night-cap. Here are the costumes for the parts."

He got out two or three curtain-calico suits, which he said was meedyevil armor for Richard III. and t'other chap, and a long white cotton night-shirt and a ruffled night-cap to match. The king was satisfied; so the duke got out his book and read the parts over in the most splendid spread-eagle way, prancing around and acting at the same time, to show how it had got to be done; then he give the book to the king and told him to get his part by heart.

There was a little one-horse town^{e3} about three mile down the bend, and after dinner the duke said he had ciphered out his idea about how to run in daylight without it being dangersome for Jim; so he allowed he would go down to the town and fix that thing. The king allowed he would go too, and see if he couldn't strike something. We was out of coffee, so Jim said I better go along with them in the canoe and get some.

When we got there, there warn't nobody stirring; streets empty, and perfectly dead and stille⁴, like Sunday. We found a sick nigger sunning himself in a back yard, and he said everybody that warn't too young or too sick or too old, was gone to camp-meeting, about two mile back in the woods. The king got the directions, and allowed he'd go and work that camp-meeting for all it was worth, and I might go, too.

The duke said what he was after was a printing office. We found it; a little bit of a concern, up over a carpenter shop—carpenters and printers all gone to the meeting, and no doors locked. It was a dirty,

littered-up place, and had ink marks, and handbills with pictures of horses and runaway niggers on them, all over the walls. The duke shed his coat and said he was all right, now. So me and the king lit out for the camp-meeting.

We got there in about a half an hour, fairly dripping, for it was a most awful hot day. There was as much as a thousand people there, from twenty mile around. The woods was full of teams and wagons, hitched everywheres, feeding out of the wagon troughs and stomping to keep off the flies. There was sheds made out of poles and roofed over with branches, where they had lemonade and gingerbread to sell, and piles of watermelons and green corn and such-like truck.

The preaching was going on under the same kinds of sheds, only they was bigger and held crowds of people. The benches was made out of outside slabs of logs, with holes bored in the round side to drive sticks into for legs. They didn't have no backs. The preachers had high platforms to stand on, at one end of the sheds. The women had on sun-bonnets; and some had linsey-woolsey frocks, some gingham ones, and a few of the young ones had on calico. Some of the young men was barefooted, and some of the children didn't have on any clothes but just a tow-linen^{e5} shirt. Some of the old women was knitting, and some of the young folks was courting on the sly.

The first shed we come to, the preacher was lining out a hymn. He lined out two lines, everybody sung it, and it was kind of grand to hear it, there was so many of them and they done it in such a rousing way; then he lined out two more for them to sing—and so on. The

people woke up more and more, and sung louder and louder; and towards the end, some begun to groan, and some begun to shout. Then the preacher begun to preach; and begun in earnest, too; and went weaving first to one side of the platform and then the other, and then a leaning down over the front of it, with his arms and his body going all the time, and shouting his words out with all his might; and every now and then he would hold up his Bible and spread it open, and kind of pass it around this way and that, shouting, "It's the brazen serpent in the wilderness^{ee}! Look upon it and live!" And people would shout out, "Glory!—A-a-men!" And so he went on, and the people groaning and crying and saying amen:

"Oh, come to the mourners' bench! come, black with sin! (*amen!*) come, sick and sore! (*amen!*) come, lame and halt, and blind! (*amen!*) come, pore and needy, sunk in shame! (*a-a-men!*) come all that's worn, and soiled, and suffering!—come with a broken spirit! come with a contrite heart! come in your rags and sin and dirt! the waters that cleanse is free, the door of heaven stands open—oh, enter in and be at rest!" (*a-a-men! glory, glory hallelujah!*)

And so on. You couldn't make out what the preacher said, any more, on account of the shouting and crying. Folks got up, everywheres in the crowd, and worked their way, just by main strength, to the mourners' bench, with the tears running down their faces; and when all the mourners had got up there to the front benches in a crowd, they sung, and shouted, and flung themselves down on the straw, just crazy and wild.

Well, the first I knowed, the king got agoing; and you

could hear him over everybody; and next he went a-charging up on to the platform and the preacher he begged him to speak to the people^{e7}, and he done it. He told them he was a pirate—been a pirate for thirty years, out in the Indian Ocean, and his crew was thinned out considerable, last spring, in a fight, and he was home now, to take out some fresh men, and thanks to goodness he'd been robbed last night, and put ashore off of a steamboat without a cent, and he was glad of it, it was the blessedest thing that ever happened to him, because he was a changed man now, and happy for the first time in his life; and poor as he was, he was going to start right off and work his way back to the Indian Ocean and put in the rest of his life trying to turn the pirates into the true path; for he could do it better than anybody else, being acquainted with all the pirate crews in that ocean; and though it would take him a long time to get there, without money, he would get there anyway, and every time he convinced a pirate he would say to him, "Don't you thank me, don't you give me no credit, it all belongs to them dear people in Pokeville camp-meeting, natural brothers and benefactors of the race—and that dear preacher there, the truest friend a pirate ever had!"

And then he busted into tears, and so did everybody. Then somebody sings out, "Take up a collection for him, take up a collection!" Well, a half a dozen made a jump to do it, but somebody sings out, "Let *him* pass the hat around!" Then everybody said it, the preacher too.

So the king went all through the crowd with his hat, swabbing his eyes, and blessing the people and praising them and thanking them for being so good to

the poor pirates away off there; and every little while the prettiest kind of girls, with the tears running down their cheeks, would up and ask him would he let them kiss him, for to remember him by; and he always done it; and some of them he hugged and kissed as many as five or six times^{e8}—and he was invited to stay a week; and everybody wanted him to live in their houses, and said they'd think it was an honor; but he said as this was the last day of the camp-meeting he couldn't do no good, and besides he was in a sweat to get to the Indian Ocean right off and go to work on the pirates.

When we got back to the raft and he come to count up, he found he had collected eighty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents. And then he had fetched away a three-gallon jug of whisky, too, that he found under a wagon when we was starting home through the woods. The king said, take it all around, it laid over any day he'd ever put in in the missionarying line. He said it warn't no use talking, heathens don't amount to shucks, alongside of pirates, to work a camp-meeting with.

The duke was thinking *he'd* been doing pretty well, till the king come to show up, but after that he didn't think so so much. He had set up and printed off two little jobs for farmers, in that printing office—horse bills—and took the money, four dollars. And he had got in ten dollars worth of advertisements for the paper, which he said he would put in for four dollars if they would pay in advance—so they done it. The price of the paper was two dollars a year, but he took in three subscriptions for half a dollar apiece on condition of them paying him in advance; they were going to pay in cordwood and

onions, as usual, but he said he had just bought the concern and knocked down the price as low as he could afford^{e9} it, and was going to run it for cash. He set up a little piece of poetry, which he made, himself, out of his own head—three verses—kind of sweet and saddish—the name of it was, “Yes, crush, cold world, this breaking heart”—and he left that all set up and ready to print in the paper and didn’t charge nothing for it. Well, he took in nine dollars and a half, and said he’d done a pretty square day’s work for it.

Then he showed us another little job he’d printed and hadn’t charged for, because it was for us. It had a picture of a runaway nigger²⁰, with a bundle on a stick, over his shoulder, and “\$200 reward” under it. The reading was all about Jim, and just described him to a dot. It said he run away from St. Jacques’ plantation, forty mile below New Orleans, last winter, and likely went north, and whoever would catch him and send him back, he could have the reward and expenses.

“Now,” says the duke, “after to-night we can run in the daytime if we want to. Whenever we see anybody coming, we can tie Jim hand and foot with a rope, and lay him in the wigwam and show this handbill and say we captured him up the river, and were too poor to travel on a steamboat, so we got this little raft on credit from our friends and are going down to get the reward. Handcuffs and chains would look still better on Jim, but it wouldn’t go well with the story of us being so poor. Too much like jewelry. Ropes are the correct thing—we must preserve the unities, as we say on the boards^{e10}.”

We all said the duke was pretty smart, and there

couldn't be no trouble about running daytimes. We judged we could make miles enough that night to get out of the reach of the pow-wow we reckoned the duke's work in the printing office was going to make in that little town—then we could boom right along, if we wanted to.

We laid low and kept still, and never shoved out till nearly ten o'clock; then we slid by, pretty wide away from the town, and didn't hoist our lantern till we was clear out of sight of it.

When Jim called me to take the watch at four in the morning, he says—

"Huck, does you reck'n we gwyne to run acrost any mo' kings on dis trip?"

"No," I says, "I reckon not."

"Well," says he, "dat's all right, den. I doan' mine one er two kings, but dat's enough. Dis one's powerful drunk, en de duke ain' much better."

I found Jim had been trying to get him to talk French, so he could hear what it was like; but he said he had been in this country so long, and had so much trouble, he'd forgot it.

Chapter 20

Hulle het ons 'n hele spul vrae gevra: hoekom ons die vlot op dié manier toemaak, en hoekom ons bedags wegkruip en net snags vaar—was Jim dalk 'n wegloopslaaf?

„Vadertjieland,” het ek geantwoord: „Dink julle 'n wegloopslaaf sal na

die *suide* toe vlug?"

Nee, het hulle erken, dit sal hy nie. Maar ek moes op die een of ander manier die saak verduidelik, dus het ek vertel:

„My mense het in die Pike-distrik in Missouri gewoon. Ek is daar gebore. Later is hulle almal dood, behalwe ek en Pa en my boetie Ike. Pa het besluit om pad te gee en in die suide by oom Ben te gaan woon —die het so ’n eenperdplotjie teen die rivier, vier-en-veertig myl onderkant Orleans. Pa was maar baie arm en hy’t heelwat skuld gehad. Toe hy dus alles betaal het, was daar net sestien dollar oor, en ons slaaf Jim. Dit was nie genoeg om ons veertienhonderd myl ver met ’n stoomboot of wát ook al te bring nie. Nou ja, toe begin die rivier afkom en eendag tref die geluk Pa: hy kry die stuk vlot in die hande, en net daar besluit ons om dit te gebruik om by Orleans te kom. Maar Pa se geluk het nie lank geduur nie. Een nag het ’n

Stoomboot die voorpunt van die vlot gevang en die hele spul van ons is oorboord, diep onder die wiel in. Ek en Jim het weer boontoe gekom, maar Pa was dronk en Ike was maar vier, so van hulle was daar g’n teken weer nie. Die paar dae daarna het ons baie sonde gehad met mense wat op skuite na ons vlot toe geroei het en probeer het om Jim weg te neem, want hulle’t gedink hy’t weggehol. Dis dié dat ons nou nie meer bedags vaar nie; snags pla hulle ons nie.” „Los my bietjie hier eenkant,” sê die hertog. „Ek sal ’n plan prak- seer sodat ons bedags ook kan ry as ons lus het. Vandag kan ons dit maar laat staan, want ons wil darem nie helder oordag by daar- die dorp daar onder verbykom nie—dis dalk nie altc gesond vir ons nie.

Teen skemeraand het dit betrokke begin raak en reënerig gelyk: hitteweerlig het laag in die lug langs geflikker en die blare het begin bibber. Mens kon sommer sien daar lê ’n lelike onweer voor. Die hertog en die koning het dus tent se kant toe gestaan om te sien hoe die beddens lyk. My bed was ’n strooimatras—heelwat beter as Jim se mieliblaarmatras: daar’s mos alewig stronke in so ’n ding wat in jou insteek en jou seermaak; en as jy omdraai, dan raas die dooie blare dat hoor en sien vergaan—dit maak jou behoorlik wakker. Nou ja, die hertog besluit toe hy sal my bed neem; maar die koning besluit hy gaan nie.

Hy sê: „Ek sou dink dat die verskil in ons range jou behoort te oortuig het dat ’n mieliblaarmatras nie geskik is vir my om op te slaap nie. U Edele kan maar die mieliblaarmatras vir jouself vat.” ’n Oomblik lank was ek en Jim doodbenoud dat daar weer moles gaan kom tussn hulle. Dus was ons baie verlig toe die hertog sê: „Dis my lot om altyd in die modder vertrap te word deur die yster- hak van verdrukking. Ellende het my edele gees gebreek. Ek swig, ek gee oor. Dit is my lot. Ek is alleen in die wêreld, laat my maar ly. Ek kan dit verduur.”

Net toe dit mooi sterk donker begin word, vaar ons uit. Die koning beveel ons om mooi in die middel van die rivier langs te hou en g’n lig uit te hang voor ons heeltemal by die dorp verby is nie, Na ’n ruk glijp ons verby ’n

klompie liggies—dit was die dorp, natuurlik-en gaan ongehinderd verby, omtrent 'n halfmyl van die wal af. Daarna hou ons nog 'n driekwartmyl lank so aan voor ons ons seinlantern ophang; en teen tienuur begin dit reent en waai en donder en blits vir die vales. Toe beveel die koning ons om wag te hou totdat die storm verby is, en hy en die hertog kruip in die tent in om te gaan slaap. Ek moes tot twaalfuur toe waghou, maar ek sou hoeka nooit gaan slaap het nie, al kón ek, want só 'n storm sien mens darem nie aldag nie. Die wind skree hier by ons verby. Elke sekonde of wat kom daar 'n blits wat die wit skuimbrandertjies vir 'n halfmyl rondom ons verlig; en dofweg deur die reent kan mens die eilande sien lê, en die bome swiep heen en weer in die wind. Dan kom daar 'n kar-*plaks!* boem! boem! boembeldeboem-boem-boem-boem! soos die donder slaat en al verder en verder wegrammel en verdwyn. En dan, ssjip! kom daar weer 'n weerlig en 'n nuwe gedonder. Die branders spoel my amper skoon van die vlot af, maar ek het g'n klere aangehad nie, dus het ek nie juis omgee nie. Daar was g'n gevaar van stompe of goed in ons pad nie, want die weerlig het so aanmekeer bly flikker dat ons elke slag betyds kon sien as daar een voorlê, sodat ons die vlot links of regs uit die pad uit kon pluk.

Ek het die middelste wagbeurt gehad, maar omdat ek toe al so vaak was, het Jim gesê hy sou die eerste helfte daarvan wakkerbly. Hy was rêrig 'n bak ou met sulke dinge. Nou ja, ek kruip toe in die tent in, maar die koning en die hertog lê so uitgesprei dat daar g'n plek vir my is nie. Toe loop lê ek maar buite. Vir die reent het ek niks omgee nie, want dit was warm en die branders was nie meer so kwaai nie. Maar so teen twee-uur het dit weer begin en Jim wou my eers roep, maar toe besluit hy die branders is nog nie hoog genoeg om skade aan te rig nie; maar hy't 'n fout gemaak, want skielik kom hier so 'n bul van 'n brander en spoel my skoon van die vlot af. Jim het hom byna doodgelag. Maar nou ja, ek hét ook nog g'n neger gesien wat so maklik vir iets kon lag nie.

Toe het ek weer begin waghou en Jim het begin snork; en na 'n ruk trek die storm vir goed weg. En toe die eerste houthuis se liggie begin brand, maak ek hom wakker en ons glij in die dag se skuilplek in.

Ná oggendete het die koning 'n verformfaaide ou stel kaarte uitge- haal en hy en die hertog het begin dobbel, teen vyf sent per rondte. Later het hulle moeg geword daarvan en besluit om 'n „veldtog te beplan”, soos hulle dit genoem het. Die hertog het sy tas loop haal, 'n hele klomp gedrukte pamflette daar uitgehaal en hulle begin voor- lees. Volgens een van hulle sou „die beroemde dr. Armand de Montalban van Parys” op die een of ander plek „'n lesing hou oor die Wetenskap van Skedelkunde”. Die plekke vir dag en datum was oopgelaat. Toegang sou tien sent wees, en daar sou „karakterkaarte voorsien word teen 25 sent stuk”. Dit was glo hy, het die hertog gesê. Op 'n ander pamflet was hy weer „die wêreldberoemde Shakespeare- akteur, Garrick junior, van Drury Lane, Londen”. Op ander pam- flette het hy 'n menigte ander name gehad en 'n klomp ander wonderlike dinge gedoen, soos om

water en goud aan te wys met 'n „wysstaf”, om „mense te genees van die vloek van hekse”, enso- voorts.

Eindelik sê hy: „Maar die muse van toneelspel is my gunsteling. Het jy ooit jou voet op die planke gesit, Koning?”

„Nee,” antwoord die koning.

„Nou ja, voor jy drie dae ouer is, sál jy, Gevalle Grootheid. Op die eerste goeie plek waar ons nou weer aankom, huur ons 'n saal en ons doen die swaardgeveg uit *Richard III* en die Balkontoneel uit *Romeo en Juliet*. Hoe klink dit vir jou?”

„Enigiets, enigiets, Bilgewater, as ek net iets daaruit kan losslaan. Maar jy sien, van toneelspeel weet ek niks en ek het ook nog nooit veel daarvan gesien nie. Ek was nog te klein toe Pa die akteurs in die paleis laat optree het. Dink jy jy sal my kan leer?”

„Maklik!”

„Nou goed. Ek is al lankal lus vir iets nuuts. Kom ons begin sommer dadelik.”

Toe vertel die hertog hom alles van wie Romeo was en wie Juliet was. Hy's daaraan gewoond om Romeo te wees, sê hy: die koning moet dus Juliet wees.

„Maar as Juliet so 'n jong meisietjie was, hertog, dan gaan my kaalkop en my grys bakkebaard mos bietjie snaaks lyk aan haar, of hoe?”

„Moenie jou daaraan steur nie. Dié spul plaasjapies sal dit nie eers agterkom nie. Buitendien, jy gaan tog 'n kostuum aanhê, en dit maak die wêreld se verskil. Juliet staan op 'n balkon om die maanlig te geniet voor sy gaan slaap, en sy't haar nagkabaai aan en 'n geplooiide slaapmus op. Hier's die kostuums vir ons rolle.”

Hy haal 'n paar kledingstukke van gordynmateriaal uit sy tas. Dié is glo middeleeuse harnasse vir Richard III en die ander kêrel, en 'n lang wit katoennagrok met 'n geplooiide slaapmus wat daarby pas. Die koning is in sy skik daarmee, dus haal die hertog sy boek uit en begin die rolle voorlees—op die heerlikste, dawerendste manier, terwyl hy rondwals en terselfdertyd toneel speel om te wys hoe dit gedoen moet word. Daarna gee hy die boek vir die koning en sê hom om sy rol uit sy kop uit te leer.

So 'n drie myl anderkant die bog was daar 'n klein vaal dorpie, en ná middagete kondig die hertog toe aan hy't sy plan klaar gepraak oor hoe ons oordag kan vaar sonder dat dit gevaarlik sal wees vir Jim. Hy sê toe hy gaan na die dorpie toe om die saak agtermekaar te kry; en die koning besluit om saam te gaan en te sien of hy dalk iets raakloop. Ons koffie was gedaan, dus het Jim gesê ek kan gerus saam- gaan in die kano en nog gaan koop.

Toe ons daar aankom, was daar g'n siel op straat nie; alles leeg en raarsdoodstil en verlate, nes 'n Sondag. Êrens in 'n agterplaas het ons 'n siek neger gekry wat besig was om in die sonnetjie te sit en bak. By hom hoor ons toe dat almal wat nie te oud of te siek was nie, vort was na die opelugbidiur in die bos, twee myl hoër op. Die koning het die pad gevra en besluit om met

hals en mag die mense te gaan bearbei. Ek kon saamgaan.

Die hertog was op soek na 'n drukker, en eindelik het ons een raakgeloop: 'n klein ou plekkie bokant 'n skrynwerker se winkeltjie. Skrynwerkers, drukkers, almal was vort, en g'n deur was gesluit nie. Dit was maar 'n vuil, smerige ou plekkie, met inkkolle en pamflette met prentjies van perde en wegloopslawe oral oor die mure versprei. Die hertog het sy baadjie uitgetrek en gesê hy sal nou verder regkom; dus is ek en die koning sonder versuim vort biduur toe.

'n Halfuur later kom ons daar aan, papnat gesweet, want dit was 'n verskriklike warm dag. Daar was seker 'n goeie duisend mense daar bymekaar, party het twintig myl ver gekom. Die bosse was vol waens en trekspanne wat sommer rond en bont oral gelos is; en die osse was aan't vreet by die wakrippe, en aan't rondtrap om die vlieë weg te hou. Daar was stalletjies van pale, met takdakke, waar hulle limonade en gemmerbrood verkoop het, en hope waatlemoene en groenmielies en goed.

Die prekery was in net sulke afdakke aan die gang, maar die was heelwat groter en het norrings mense in hulle gehad. Die banke het bestaan uit die buitenste kante van houtstompe, met gate aan die ronde kant ingeboor om stokke deur te steek vir pote. Leunings was daar nie. Elke prediker het op 'n hoë platform aan die een kant van die afdak gestaan. Die vrouens^het almal kappies gedra; party se rokke was van wollerige materiaal, ander van katoen, en 'n paar van die jongeres s'n van sis. Party van die jongmense was kaalvoet, en al wat die kinders aangehad het, was growwe linnehempies. Van die ou tantes was aan die brei; en 'n klompie van die jongmense was stille- tjes met vryerighede besig.

Onder die eerste afdak waar ons aanland, is die prediker net besig om 'n gesang voor te lê. Hy lê twee reëls en dan sing almal dit saam; en dit het mens half aardig-lekker laat voel om dit te hoor, want daar was so baie van hulle en hulle't so uit voile bors gesing. Dan lê die prediker die twee volgende reëls, en hulle sing weer—ensovoorts. Die mense begin al meer gaande raak, en hulle begin harder en harder sing; hier na die end se kant toe begin party glad kerm en ander begin skree. Toe begin die prediker met sy preek, en hy val ook sommer met mening weg, en hy mik-mik eers na dié kant van die verhoog toe, en dan na dáárdie kant toe; dan leun hy voor oor die randjie, en die hele tyd is sy arms en sy lyf aan die gang, en hy dreun die woorde uit so hard as wat hy kan. Elke kort-kort hou hy sy Bybel in die lug op en sprei dit oop en gee dit so 'n slag dié en dáárdie kant toe rond, en hy bulder: „Dit is die koperslang in die wildernis! Kyk daarna en lewe!” En dan skree al die mense: „Gloria! Aaaaaaa-men!” En so hou hy maar aan, terwyl die mense kerm en huil en amen skree:

„Kom na die bank van die weeklaers! Kom, julle wat swart is van sonde! (Amen!) Kom, julle wat siek en gewond is! (Amen!) Kom, julle lammes en kreupeles! (Amen!) Kom, julle armes en behoeftiges wat wegsink in skaamte! (Aamen!) Kom, almal wat moeg en be- soedel en vol smarte is! Kom met 'n

gebroke gees! Kom met 'n berouvolle hart! Kom, in julle vodde en sonde en vuilis! Die reini- gende water is vry, die hemelpoort staan oop—o, kom binne en rus! (*Aaaamen! Gloria, gloria, halleluja!*)"

Ensovoorts. Later kon mens glad nie meer uitmaak wat die prediker sê nie, so skree en huil die mense. Oral in die skare staan mense op en beur met al hul krag vorentoe na die weeklaers se bank toe, met trane wat oor hul wange loop. En toe al die weeklaers uit- eindelijk saamgedrom staan daar in die voorste banke, toe begin hulle sing, en skree, en hulle val op die strooi neer, skoon mal en wild.

Toe ek my weer kom kry, is die koning skoonveld, en jy kan sy stem bo al die ander s'n uit hoor. Die volgende oomblik begin hy aanstorm na die verhoog toe en die prediker soebat hom om met die mense te praat—en hy maak so. Hy vertel hulle hoe hy dertig jaar lank 'n seerower op die Indiese Oseaan was; en laaste lente is sy span sleg uitgedun deur 'n geveg; en nou is hy weer tuis met die doel om nuwe mense te kom werf. Maar vaderdank, laasnag is hy bested en sonder 'n duit in sy sak van 'n stoomboot afgegooi, en hy is dankbaar daaroor: dit is die wonderlikste ding wat nog ooit met hom gebeur het, want nou is hy 'n ander mens, en vir die eerste keer in sy lewe voel hy gelukkig. So arm soos hy is, gaan hy dadelik aan die werk spring om sy passaat na die Indiese Oseaan toe terug te werk en die res van sy lewe daaraan te wy om seerowers na die regte weg te bekeer: want g'n ander mens kan dit so goed soos hy doen nie, omdat hy die seerowers op daardie oseaan so goed ken. Dit sal lank duur om sonder geld weer daar terug te kom, maar hy sál daar kom; en elke slag as hy 'n seerower bekeer, sal hy vir hom sê: „Moenie vir my dankie sê nie. Moenie my die eer daarvoor gee nie. Dit kom alles daardie liewe mense in Pokeville se biduur toe. Hulle is die gebore broers en helpers van ons ras. En dit kom daardie liewe prediker toe, die beste vriend wat enige seerower nog ooit gehad het!”

Toe bars hy in trane uit, en almal huil saam. Daarna roep iemand: „Hou vir hom 'n kollekte! Hou vir hom 'n kollekte!” 'n Halfdosyn mense spring vorentoe, maar toe roep iemand anders: „Laat hy sêlf die hoed rondstuur!” En almal beaam dit, die prediker inkluis.

Vryf-vryf aan sy oe begin die koning met sy hoed tussen die mense deurloop, en hy spreek seëninge uit en prys die mense en bedank hulle dat hulle so goed is vir die arme seerowers daar ver op die see. En kort-kort kom van die mooiste meisiekinders met trane op hulle wange na hom toe en vra hom om hulle tog asseblief te soen sodat hulle hom nooit kan vergeet nie; en dit doen hy met graagte, elke slag, en party van hulle omhels en soen hy tot vyf, ses keer. Party mense nooi hom om 'n week by hulle te kom kuier, en 'n ieder en 'n elk wil hom as 'n gas in sy huis hê—hulle sal dit as 'n eer beskou. Maar hy antwoord dat dit tog die laaste dag van die biduur is, dus sal dit nie juis help nie—en buitendien is hy baie haastig om so gou as moontlik by die Indiese Oseaan terug te kom en die seerowers te begin bearbei.

Terug by die vlot het hy sy kollekte begin tel: daar was sewe-en- tagtig

dollar en vyf-en-twintig sent. Daarby het hy 'n groot kan whisky vasgelê wat hy onder 'n wa sien staan het net toe ons op pad terug was huis toe. Alles in ag genome, so't die koning gesê, was dié dag die grootste sukses wat hy nog ooit met sy sendingwerk behaal het. Dit help nie om te stry nie: heidene is sommer nikswerd in vergelyking met seerowers, as mens 'n biduur behoorlik wil bearbei.

Die hertog het gedink hy't taamlik goed gevaar, tot die koning opgedaag het—toe't hy nie juis meer so bly dink nie. Hy't daar in die drukkerij twee goedjies vir boere opgestel en gedruk—perderekenings—en die geld daarvoor gekry: vier dollar. Daarby het hy tien dollar se advertensies vir die koerantjie gewerf: hy't gesê hy sal dit vir die mense gee vir net vier dollar as hulle vooruit betaal; hulle het toe so gemaak. Die koerantjie se intekengeld was twee dollar per jaar, maar hy't drie intekenaars net 'n halwe dollar elk laat betaal op voorwaarde dat hulle vooruit betaal; hulle wou oudergewoonte met wol en uie betaal, maar hy't gesê dat hy nou die koerant oorgeneem het en dat die prys klaar so laag was as wat hy maar kon bekostig—hy wou dus kontant hê. Verder het hy 'n gediggie gemaak, drie versies lank, sommer so uit sy kop uit—alte mooi en half treurig, met die naam van *Ja, breek, O koue wêreld, hierdie hart*—en dié't hy mooi netjies geset, net reg vir druk in die koerant, sonder om 'n duit daarvoor te vra. Hy't altesame dus nege en 'n half dollar losgeslaan, en daarvoor het hy 'n goeie dag se werk gedoen ook.

Daarna het hy ons nog 'n stukkie drukwerk gewys wat hy gedoen het en waarvoor hy niks gevra het nie, want dit was vir onself. Dit was 'n prentjie van 'n wegloopslaaf met 'n bondel goed aan 'n stok oor sy skouer, en daaronder was gedruk: *\$200 beloning*. Die leesstof was alles oor Jim en het hom haarfyn beskrywe. Die pamflet het vertel dat hy laasjaar in die winter weggeloop het van die St. Jacques-plantasie veertig myl onderkant New Orleans, en dat hy waarskynlik noordwaarts gevlug het. Enigiemand wat hom vang en terugstuur, sou die beloning plus vergoeding van onkoste ontvang.

„Ná vannag kan ons nou maar bedags ook ry as ons wil,” sê die hertog. „As ons iemand sien aankom, dan bind ons net Jim se arms en bene met 'n tou vas en laat hom in die tent lê, en ons wys vir die mense die pamflet en sê ons het hom hoër op in die rivier gevang. Ons sê vir hulle ons is te arm om op 'n stoomboot te reis, toe't ons maar die vlot op skuld gekoop by vriende en nou is ons op pad om die beloning te gaan opeis. Boeie en kettings sal heelwat beter lyk aan Jim, maar dit sal nie strook met ons armoede nie. Dit lyk te veel na juwele. Toue is net die regte ding. Mens moet die dramatiese eenvormighede handhaaf, soos ons op die planke sê.”

Ons het almal gedink dis nou sommer bak van die hertog en nou kon daar g'n moeilikheid meer wees met 'n ryery bedags nie. Ons net gereken dat ons daardie nag ver genoeg sal wegkom van die bohaai wat die hertog se gewerskaf in die drukkerij daar in die dorpie sou veroorsaak; dan kon ons maar een stryk aanhou as ons so voel.

Ons het goed weggekruipt en nie geroer nie, en eers tienuur ritgevaar,

met 'n wye boog om die dorpie; en ons lantern het ons eers opgehang toe ons heeltemal buite gesig daarvan was.

Toe Jim my vieruur die nag kom roep om te begin waghou, vra hy: „Huck, dink jy ons gaat nog anner konings ok kort voor lank raak- loop?”

„Nec,” sê ek. „Ek dink nie so nie.”

„Nou, dan's dit orraait,” sê hy. „Ek gee nie om vir een of twee konings nie, maar dis genoeg. Dié ou is smoordronk. En met die hertog gaat dit nie veel beterder nie.”

Toe vind ek uit dat Jim hom probeer oorhaal het om Frans te praat sodat hy kon hoor hoe dit klink; maar die koning het glo geantwoord dat hy nou al so lank hier in dié land was, dat hy dit skoon vergeet het.

SECTION 21

It was after sun-up, now, but we went right on, and didn't tie up. The king and the duke turned out, by-and-by, looking pretty rusty; but after they'd jumped overboard and took a swim, it chippered them up a good deal. After breakfast the king he took a seat on a corner of the raft, and pulled off his boots and rolled up his britches, and let his legs dangle in the water, so as to be comfortable, and lit his pipe, and went to getting his *Romeo and Juliet* by heart. When he had got it pretty good, him and the duke begun to practice it together. The duke had to learn him over and over again, how to say every speech; and he made him sigh, and put his hand on his heart, and after while he said he done it pretty well; "only," he says, "you mustn't bellow out *Romeo!* that way, like a bull—you must say it soft, and sick, and languishy, so—R-o-o-meo! that is the idea; for Juliet's a dear sweet mere child of a girl, you know, and she don't bray like a jackass."

Well, next they got out a couple of long swords that the duke made out of oak laths, and begun to practice the sword-fight—the duke called himself Richard III.; and the way they laid on, and pranced around the raft was grand to see. But by-and-by the king tripped and fell overboard, and after that they took a rest, and had a talk about all kinds of adventures they'd had in other times along the river.

After dinner, the duke says:

“Well, Capet^{e1}, we’ll want to make this a first-class show, you know, so I guess we’ll add a little more to it. We want a little something to answer encores with, anyway.”

“What’s onkores, Bilgewater?”

The duke told him, and then says:

“I’ll answer by doing the Highland fling or the sailor’s hornpipe; and you—well, let me see—oh, I’ve got it—you can do Hamlet’s soliloquy.”

“Hamlet’s which?”

“Hamlet’s soliloquy, you know; the most celebrated thing in Shakespeare. Ah, it’s sublime, sublime! Always fetches the house. I haven’t got it in the book—I’ve only got one volume—but I reckon I can piece it out from memory. I’ll just walk up and down a minute, and see if I can call it back from recollection’s vaults.”

So he went to marching up and down, thinking, and frowning horrible every now and then; then he would hoist up his eyebrows; next he would squeeze his hand on his forehead and stagger back and kind of moan; next he would sigh, and next he’d let on to drop a tear. It was beautiful to see him. By-and-by he got it. He told us to give attention. Then he strikes a most noble attitude, with one leg shoved forwards, and his arms stretched away up, and his head tilted back, looking up at the sky; and then he begins to rip and rave and grit his teeth; and after that, all through his speech he howled, and spread around, and swelled up his chest, and just knocked the spots out of any acting ever I see before. This is the speech^{e2}—I learned it,

easy enough, while he was learning it to the king:

To be, or not to be; that is the bare bodkin

That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would fardels bear, till Birnam Wood do
come to Dunsinane,

But that the fear of something after death

Murders the innocent sleep,

Great nature's second course,

And makes us rather sling the arrows of outrageous
fortune

Than fly to others that we know not of.

There's the respect must give us pause:

Wake Duncan^{e3} with thy knocking! I would thou
couldst;

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

The law's delay, and the quietus which his pangs
might take,

In the dead waste and middle of the night, when
churchyards yawn

In customary suits of solemn black,

But that the undiscovered country from whose bourne
no traveler returns^{e4},

Breathes forth contagion on the world,

And thus the native hue of resolution, like the poor
cat i' the adage,

Is sicklied o'er with care,

And all the clouds that lowered o'er our housetops,

With this regard their currents turn awry,

And lose the name of action.

'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. But soft
you, the fat Ophelia:

Ope not thy ponderous and marble jaws,

But get thee to a nunnery—go!²²

Well, the old man he liked that speech, and he mighty soon got it so he could do it first rate. It seemed like he was just born for it; and when he had his hand in and was excited, it was perfectly lovely the way he would rip and tear and rair up behind when he was getting it off.

The first chance we got, the duke he had some show bills printed; and after that, for two or three days as we floated along, the raft was a most uncommon lively place, for there warn't nothing but sword-fighting and rehearsing—as the duke called it—going on all the time. One morning, when we was pretty well down the

State of Arkansaw, we come in sight of a little one-horse town²³ in a big bend; so we tied up about three-quarters of a mile above it, in the mouth of a crick which was shut in like a tunnel by the cypress trees, and all of us but Jim took the canoe and went down there to see if there was any chance in that place for our show.

We struck it mighty lucky; there was going to be a circus there that afternoon, and the country people was already beginning to come in, in all kinds of old shackly wagons, and on horses. The circus would leave before night, so our show would have a pretty good chance. The duke he hired the court house, and we went around and stuck up our bills. They read like this:

Shaksperean Revival!!!

Wonderful Attraction!

For One Night Only!

The world renowned tragedians,
David Garrick the younger, of Drury Lane Theatre,
London,
and
Edmund Kean the elder^{e5}, of the Royal Haymarket
Theatre,
Whitechapel, Pudding Lane, Piccadilly, London, and
the Royal Continental Theatres, in their sublime
Shaksperean Spectacle entitled
The Balcony Scene
in

Romeo and Juliet!!!

Romeo.....
.....Mr. Garrick.

Juliet.....
....Mr. Kean.

Assisted by the whole strength of the company!

New costumes, new scenery, new appointments!

Also:

The thrilling, masterly, and blood-curdling
Broad-sword conflict
In Richard III.!!!

Richard III.....
.....Mr. Garrick.

Richmond.....
.....Mr. Kean.

also:

(by special request,)

Hamlet's Immortal Soliloquy!!

By the Illustrious Kean!

Done by him 300 consecutive nights in Paris!
For One Night Only,

On account of imperative European engagements!

Admission 25 cents; children and servants, 10 cents.

Then we went loafing around the town. The stores and houses was most all old shackly dried-up frame concerns^{e6} that hadn't ever been painted; they was set up three or four foot above ground on stilts, so as to be out of reach of the water when the river was overflowed^{e7}. The houses had little gardens around them, but they didn't seem to raise hardly anything in them but jimpson weeds, and sunflowers, and ash-piles, and old curled-up boots and shoes, and pieces of bottles, and rags, and played-out tin-ware. The fences was made of different kinds of boards, nailed on at different times; and they leaned every which-way, and had gates that didn't generly have but one hinge—a leather one. Some of the fences had been whitewashed, some time or another, but the duke said it was in Clumbus's time, like enough. There was generly hogs in the garden, and people driving them out.

All the stores was along one street. They had white-domestic awnings in front, and the country people hitched their horses to the awning-posts. There was empty dry-goods boxes under the awnings, and loafers roosting on them all day long, whittling^{e8} them with their Barlow knives; and chewing tobacco^{e9}, and gaping and yawning and stretching—a mighty ornery lot. They generly had on yellow straw hats most as wide as an umbrella, but didn't wear no coats nor waistcoats; they called one another Bill, and Buck, and Hank, and Joe, and Andy, and talked lazy and drawly^{e10}, and used considerable many cuss-words. There was as many as one loafer leaning up against every awning-post, and he most always had his hands in his britches pockets, except when he fetched them

out to lend a chaw of tobacco or scratch. What a body was hearing amongst them, all the time was—

“Gimme a chaw ’v tobacker, Hank.”

“Cain’t—I hain’t got but one chaw left. Ask Bill.”

Maybe Bill he gives him a chaw; maybe he lies and says he ain’t got none. Some of them kinds of loafers never has a cent in the world, nor a chaw of tobacco of their own. They get all their chawing by borrowing—they say to a fellow, “I wisht you’d len’ me a chaw, Jack, I jist this minute give Ben Thompson the last chaw I had”—which is a lie, pretty much every time; it don’t fool nobody but a stranger; but Jack ain’t no stranger, so he says—

“*You* give him a chaw, did you? so did your sister’s cat’s grandmother. You pay me back the chaws you’ve awready borry’d off’n me, Lafe Buckner, then I’ll loan you one or two ton of it, and won’t charge you no back intrust, nuther.”

“Well, I *did* pay you back some of it wunst.”

“Yes, you did—’bout six chaws. You borry’d store tobacker and paid back nigger-head.”

Store tobacco is flat black plug, but these fellows mostly chaws the natural leaf twisted. When they borrow a chaw, they don’t generly cut it off with a knife, but they set the plug in between their teeth, and gnaw with their teeth and tug at the plug with their hands till they get it in two—then sometimes the one that owns the tobacco looks mournful at it when it’s handed back, and says, sarcastic—

“Here, gimme the *chaw*, and you take the *plug*.”

All the streets and lanes was just mud, they warn’t nothing else *but* mud—mud as black as tar, and nigh about a foot deep in some places; and two or three inches deep in *all* the places. The hogs loafed and grunted around, everywheres. You’d see a muddy sow and a litter of pigs come lazying along the street and whollop herself right down in the way, where folks had to walk around her, and she’d stretch out, and shut her eyes, and wave her ears, whilst the pigs was milking her, and look as happy as if she was on salary. And pretty soon you’d hear a loafer sing out, “Hi! so boy! sick him, Tige!” and away the sow would go, squealing most horrible, with a dog or two swinging to each ear, and three or four dozen more a-coming; and then you would see all the loafers get up and watch the thing out of sight, and laugh at the fun and look grateful for the noise. Then they’d settle back again till there was a dog-fight^{e11}. There couldn’t anything wake them up all over, and make them happy all over, like a dog-fight—unless it might be putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him, or tying a tin pan to his tail^{e12} and see him run himself to death.

On the river front some of the houses was sticking out over the bank, and they was bowed and bent, and about ready to tumble in. The people had moved out of them. The bank was caved away under one corner of some others, and that corner was hanging over. People lived in them yet, but it was dangersome, because sometimes a strip of land as wide as a house caves in at a time. Sometimes a belt of land a quarter of a mile deep will start in and cave along and cave along till it all caves into the river in one summer. Such

a town as that has to be always moving back, and back, and back, because the river's always gnawing at it.

The nearer it got to noon that day, the thicker and thicker was the wagons and horses in the streets, and more coming all the time. Families fetched their dinners with them, from the country, and eat them in the wagons. There was considerable whiskey drinking going on, and I seen three fights. By-and-by somebody sings out—

“Here comes old Boggs!—in from the country for his little old monthly drunk—here he comes, boys!”

All the loafers looked glad—I reckoned they was used to having fun out of Boggs. One of them says—

“Wonder who he's a gwyne to chaw up this time. If he'd a chawed up all the men he's ben a gwyne to chaw up in the last twenty year, he'd have considerable ruputation, now.”

Another one says, “I wisht old Boggs 'd threaten me, 'cuz then I'd know I warn't gwyne to die for a thousan' year.”

Boggs comes a-tearing along on his horse, whooping and yelling like an Injun, and singing out—

“Cler the track, thar. I'm on the waw-path, and the price uv coffins is a gwyne to raise.”

He was drunk, and weaving about in his saddle; he was over fifty year old, and had a very red face. Everybody yelled at him, and laughed at him, and

sassed him, and he sassed back, and said he'd attend to them and lay them out in their regular turns, but he couldn't wait now, because he'd come to town to kill old Colonel Sherburn, and his motto was, "meat first, and spoon vittles to top off on."

He see me, and rode up and says—

"Whar'd you come f'm, boy? You prepared to die?"

Then he rode on. I was scared; but a man says—

"He don't mean nothing; he's always a carryin' on like that, when he's drunk. He's the best-naturedest old fool in Arkansaw—never hurt nobody, drunk nor sober."

Boggs rode up before the biggest store in town and bent his head down so he could see under the curtain of the awning, and yells—

"Come out here, Sherburn! Come out and meet the man you've swindled. You're the houn' I'm after, and I'm a gwyne to have you, too!"

And so he went on, calling Sherburn everything he could lay his tongue to, and the whole street packed with people listening and laughing and going on. By-and-by a proud-looking man about fifty-five—and he was a heap the best dressed man in that town, too—steps out of the store, and the crowd drops back on each side to let him come. He says to Boggs, mighty ca'm and slow—he says:

"I'm tired of this; but I'll endure it till one o'clock. Till one o'clock, mind—no longer. If you open your mouth

against me only once, after that time, you can't travel so far but I will find you."

Then he turns and goes in. The crowd looked mighty sober; nobody stirred, and there warn't no more laughing. Boggs rode off blackguarding Sherburn as loud as he could yell, all down the street; and pretty soon back he comes and stops before the store, still keeping it up. Some men crowded around him and tried to get him to shut up, but he wouldn't; they told him it would be one o'clock in about fifteen minutes, and so he *must* go home—he must go right away. But it didn't do no good. He cussed away, with all his might, and throwed his hat down in the mud and rode over it, and pretty soon away he went a-raging down the street again, with his gray hair a-flying. Everybody that could get a chance at him tried their best to coax him off of his horse so they could lock him up and get him sober; but it warn't no use—up the street he would tear again, and give Sherburn another cussing. By-and-by somebody says—

"Go for his daughter!—quick, go for his daughter; sometimes he'll listen to her. If anybody can persuade him, she can."

So somebody started on a run. I walked down street a ways, and stopped. In about five or ten minutes, here comes Boggs again—but not on his horse. He was a-reeling across the street towards me, bareheaded, with a friend on both sides of him a-holt of his arms and hurrying him along. He was quiet, and looked uneasy; and he warn't hanging back any, but was doing some of the hurrying himself. Somebody sings out—

“Boggs!”

I looked over there to see who said it, and it was that Colonel Sherburn. He was standing perfectly still, in the street, and had a pistol raised in his right hand—not aiming it, but holding it out with the barrel tilted up towards the sky. The same second I see a young girl coming on the run, and two men with her. Boggs and the men turned round, to see who called him, and when they see the pistol the men jumped to one side, and the pistol barrel come down slow and steady to a level—both barrels cocked. Boggs throws up both of his hands, and says, “O Lord, don’t shoot!” Bang! goes the first shot, and he staggers back clawing at the air—bang! goes the second one, and he tumbles backwards onto the ground, heavy and solid, with his arms spread out. That young girl screamed out, and comes rushing, and down she throws herself on her father, crying, and saying, “Oh, he’s killed him, he’s killed him!” The crowd closed up around them, and shouldered and jammed one another, with their necks stretched, trying to see, and people on the inside trying to shove them back, and shouting, “Back, back! give him air, give him air!”

Colonel Sherburn he tossed his pistol onto the ground, and turned around on his heels and walked off.²⁴

They took Boggs to a little drug store, the crowd pressing around, just the same, and the whole town following, and I rushed and got a good place at the window, where I was close to him and could see in. They laid him on the floor, and put one large Bible under his head, and opened another one and spread it on his breast—but they tore open his shirt first, and I

seen where one of the bullets went in. He made about a dozen long gasps, his breast lifting the Bible up when he drew in his breath^{e13}, and letting it down again when he breathed it out—and after that he laid still; he was dead. Then they pulled his daughter away from him, screaming and crying, and took her off. She was about sixteen, and very sweet and gentle-looking, but awful pale and scared.

Well, pretty soon the whole town was there, squirming and scrouging^{e14} and pushing and shoving to get at the window and have a look, but people that had the places wouldn't give them up, and folks behind them was saying all the time, "Say, now, you've looked enough, you fellows; 'taint right and 'taint fair, for you to stay thar all the time, and never give nobody a chance; other folks has their rights as well as you."

There was considerable jawing back, so I slid out, thinking maybe there was going to be trouble. The streets was full, and everybody was excited. Everybody that seen the shooting was telling how it happened, and there was a big crowd packed around each one of these fellows, stretching their necks and listening. One long lanky man, with long hair and a big white fur stove-pipe hat on the back of his head, and a crooked-handled cane, marked out the places on the ground where Boggs stood, and where Sherburn stood, and the people following him around from one place to t'other and watching everything he done, and bobbing their heads to show they understood, and stooping a little and resting their hands on their thighs to watch him mark the places on the ground with his cane; and then he stood up straight and stiff where Sherburn had stood, frowning and having his hat-brim

down over his eyes, and sung out, “Boggs!” and then fetched his cane down slow to a level, and says “Bang!” staggered backwards, says “Bang!” again, and fell down flat on his back. The people that had seen the thing said he done it perfect; said it was just exactly the way it all happened. Then as much as a dozen people got out their bottles and treated him.

Well, by-and-by somebody said Sherburn ought to be lynched. In about a minute everybody was saying it; so away they went, mad and yelling, and snatching down every clothes-line they come to, to do the hanging with.

Chapter 21

Naderhand was die son al uit, maar ons hou reguit aan sonder om vas te meer. Die koning en die hertog het ook later uit die vere gepeul en maar taamlik oes gelyk; maar nadat hulle ’n slag oorboord gespring en geswem het, het dit met hulle ook beter gegaan. Ná ete gaan sit die koning op ’n hoek van die vlot en pluk sy stewels af en rol sy broekspye op en laat sy bene ahang in die water sodat hy nou lekker gemaklik kan voel, en hy steek sy pyp op en begin om *Romeo en Juliet* uit sy kop te leer. Toe hy dit taamlik goed onder die knie het, begin hy en die hertog dit saam oefen. Die hertog moes hom oor en oor leer om sy stukkie op te sê, en hy’t hom laat sug en hom sy hand op sy hart laat sit, en na ’n ruk het hy gesê dit begin nou taamlik goed gaan.

„Al fout,” sê hy, „is dit: jy moenie *Romeo* uitbult soos ’n bees nie. Sê dit saggies, siekerig, flouërig. So: R-o-o-meo! Verstaan jy? Want Juliet is ’n fyn, fraai, allerliefste ou klein meisietjie, sien, sy sal nie balk soos ’n verliefde donkie nie.”

Daarna loop haal hulle twee lang swaarde wat die hertog van eikelatte gemaak het, en hulle begin die swaardgeveg oefen—die hertog was glo Richard III. En dit was alte mooi om te sien hoe hulle te kere gaan en rondans oor die vlot. Maar na ’n rukkie trap die koning toe ’n slag mis en hy val oorboord, en toe rus hulle eers ’n lang ruk en begin gesels oor al die avonture wat hulle vroeër dae al op die rivier belewe het.

Ná middagete sê die hertog: „Wel, Capet, ons moet dit sommer ’n eersteklas vertoning maak, né? Ek skat ons moet weer ’n bietjie daaraan werk.

Ons het 'n ietsie nodig om te doen as daar dalk *encores* is."

„Wat se goed is aangkórs, Bilgewater?"

Die hertog lê dit eers vir horn uit. Toe sê hy: „Ek sal antwoord met die Skotse Riel of die Seeman se Doedelsak. En jy? Nou ja, la'k sien ... a! skote petoors! Jy kan Hamlet se monoloog doen."

„Hamlet se hoe?"

„Hamlet se monoloog, man. Dis die beroemdste ding in Shakespeare. A, dis goddelik, goddelik! Dit steel altyd die gehoor se hart. Ek het dit nie hier in my boek nie—ek het net deel een hier—maar ek dink ek kan dit wel uit my geheue aanmekaar timmer. Ek sal net so 'n oomblikkie heen en weer loop en sien of ek dit uit die kluike van herinnering kan haal."

Toe begin hy heen en weer loop, kliphard aan die dink, en kort- kort gee hy 'n vreeslike frons, of hy lig sy wenkbroue op, of hy druk sy hand teen sy voorkop vas en steier met 'n halwe kreun agteruit, of hy sug, of hy stort 'n traan. Dit was pragtig om horn so te sien. En na 'n rukkie toe hét hy dit. Nou moet ons almal aandagtig luister, sê hy. En hy neem 'n edele houding in, met die een been vorentoe en die arms boontoe uitgestrek en sy kop agteroor gegooi sodat hy in die lug in kyk; toe begin hy kreun en dreun en tande kners; en daar- na, die hele tyd terwyl sy stuk aan die gang is, skreeu hy, en sprei hom uit, en stoot sy bors uit—sowat van toneelspeel het ek nog so nooit as te nimmer gesien nie. Só gaan die woorde (ek het dit maklik opgetel terwyl hy besig was om dit vir die koning te leer):

Te wees, of nie te wees nie; dis die ontblote dolk Wat die ramspoed van 'n té lang lewe is;

Want wie sal laste dra tot Birnamwoud opruk na Dunsinane Tensy die vrees vir iets oorkant die dood Die onskuldige slaap vermoor—

Die natuur se tweede kuur—

Ons werp dus liefs die wrede lot se pyle uit As om te vlug na ander, onbekend.

Daar's eerbied wat ons moet laat nadink eers:

Wek Duncan met jou klop! As jy maar kon! Want wie verdra die tyd se smaad en slae,

Die tiran se onreg, trotsaards boon,

Die talmende reg en die stilte wat sy pyn mag gryp In die hol en doodse middel van die nag, as grafte gaap In die gewone drag van somber swart;

Tensy die onontdekte land waarvan geen reisiger ooit terugkeer nie Besmetting oor die wêreld blaas.

So word die aangebore bios van 'n besluit, soos die arme kat in die spreekwoord,

Deur kommer bleek gemaak,

En al die wolke wat nou oor ons dakke sak Draai met dié blik hul storms weg En is nie meer 'n daad nie.

O dis 'n afronding waar ek na smag. Maar kyk: die mooi Ophelia: Hou nou jou swaar en marmerkake toe En loop vort na 'n klooster—loop!

Die oubaas het gehou van dié stuk en in 'n japtrap het hy dit so goed

geken dat dit sommer voor die wind gegaan het. Dit was asof hy gebore was om dié rol te speel. En toe hy nou eers goed konfyt was en opgewonde kon raak, was dit net te pragtig om te sien hoe hy beduie en armswaai en sy agterstel wip as hy dit opsê.

Met die eerste die beste geleentheid het die hertog 'n klompie biljette vir die uitvoering laat druk; en die twee, drie dae daarná, terwyl ons aldeur afgedryf het, was die vlot sommer 'n jollie plek, want dit was net die ene swaardgevegte en repetisies—só het hulle dit genoem—van vroeg tot laat. Een oggend, toe ons al diep in die hart van die Arkansas-provinsie was, het ons op 'n klein dorpie in 'n groot bog afgekom. So 'n driekwartmyl hoër op het ons vasmeeer, mooi in die bek van 'n lopies wat soos 'n tonnel gelyk het van die sipresbome daar rondom, en almal van ons—behalwe Jim—is met die kano soontoe om te sien of die plekkie dalk moontlikheid vir ons uitvoering het.

Ons w'as deksels gelukkig. Dié middag sou daar 'n sirkus wees en die boeremense was al klaar aan die inkom in alle moontlike soorte lendelam waentjies, of te perd. Die sirkus sou voor donker weer padgee, dus sou ons uitvoering net mooi inpas.

Die hertog het die hofsaal gaan huur en toe't ons gaan plakgate opplak. Hulle het só gelyk:

Shakespeare-herlewing!!!

Wonderlike Aanbieding!

Net Een Aand!

Die wêreldberoemde tragiese akteurs David Garrick junior, van die Drury Lane Teater in Londen,

en

Edmund Kean senior, van die Royal Haymarket Teater te Whitechapel, Pudding Lane, Piccadilly, Londen, en die Koninklike Teaters op die Vasteland, in hulle voortreflike Shakespeare-uitvoering genaamd Die Balkontoneel uit

Romeo en Juliet!!

Romeo Mnr. Garrick

Juliet Mnr. Kean

Bygestaan deur al die lede van hul geselskap!

Nuwe kostuums, nuwe decor, nuwe verhoogstukke!

Ook:

Die spannende, meesterlike en bloedstollende Swaardgeveg uit Richard III!!!

Richard III Mnr. Garrick

Richmond Mnr. Kean

ook:

(op spesiale versoek)

Hamlet se Onsterflike Monoloog!! Deur die Vermaarde Kean!

Na 300 agtereenvolgende aande in Parys!

Net Een Aand.

Vanweë dringende werkprogram in Europa!

Toegang 25 sent; kinders en bediendes 10 sent.

Daarna het ons bietjie deur die dorpie geslenter. Die winkels en huise was amper almal bouvallige houtgehuggies wat nooit eers geverf is nie; almal so 'n drie of vier voet bokant die grond op pale, buite bereik van die water wanneer die rivier oor sy walle stroom. Die huise het tuintjies rondom hulle gehad, maar dit het nie gelyk asof daar juis iets gekweek word nie—behalwe kakiebosse en sonne- blomme en ashope en ou opgekrulde stewels en skoene, en bottel- stukke en vodde en voos blikware. Die heinings was gemaak van verskillende soorte planke wat nie almal gelyk daar vasgespyker is nie, sodat hulle sommer mankoliekerig alkante toe oorgeleun het; en die hekkies het gewoonlik net een skarniertjie gehad—'n leer- riempie. Hier en daar was 'n heining wat op die een of ander tyd 'n slag afgewit was, maar volgens die hertog was dit waarskynlik nog in Columbus se dae. In die meeste tuine was daar varke, en mense wat besig was om hulle uit te jaag.

Al die winkels het langs een straat af op 'n ry gestaan. Aan die voorkant was daar wit stoepe, en aan die stoeppele het die boere- mense hulle perde vasgebind. Onder die verandas was daar stawels leë kaste, en heeldag lank het daar 'n spul leeglêers op rondgesit en die hout met hulle knipmesse gekerf, en gesit en ginnegaap en twak gekou—sommer 'n oes klomp. Gewoonlik het hulle geel strooihoede so groot soos sambrele gedra, maar g'n baadjie of onderbaadjie daarby nie. Hulle't mekaar Bill en Buck en Hank en Joe en Andy genoem, en so 'n lui, harmansdrup-manier van praat gehad, goed gekruie met vloekwoorde. Daar was seker maklik een leegleer teen elke lieue paal, met sy hande in sy broeksakke—behalwe wanneer hy 'n pruimpie wou uithaal of'n jeukplek wou krap.

Al wat mens die hele tyd daar onder hulle gehoor het, was: „Gee my 'n pruimpie twak, jong, Hank.”

„Kannie. Het nog net een pruimpie oor. Vra vir Bill.”

Miskien gee Bill hom 'n pruimpie; miskien lieg hy en sê hy't ook niks. Daar's van daardie leeglêers wat g'n dooie duit op aarde besit nie, en nie 'n enkele kouseltjie twak van hul eie nie. Hulle leen al hulle pruimpies van ánder. So 'n ou sal vir iemand sê: „Kan jy nie vir my 'n pruimpie afstaan nie, Jack? Ek het nou net my laaste ene- tjie vir Ben Thompson gegee”—maar dis natuurlik byna altyd 'n lieg, en dit lei niemand om die bos nie (behalwe miskien 'n vreemde- ling). Maar Jack is nou nie 'n vreemdeling nie, dus antwoord hy: „O jy't vir hom 'n pruimpie gegee, nê? Jou suster se kat se ouma sou eerder so iets doen. Gee jy liewers vir my al die pruimpies terug wat jy al van my afgebedel het, Lafe Buckner, dan sal ek jou 'n ton of twee daarvan leen—sonder rente ook.”

„Ek hét jou eenkeer 'n paar teruggegee.”

„Ja, ek weet—omtrent ses pruimpies. Jy't winkeltwak by my geleen en kroestwak teruggegee.”

Winkeltwak koop mens in plat swart stukke, maar dié spul kou gewoonlik sommer regte tabakblare wat hulle in 'n rolletjie draai. En as iemand 'n pruimpie leen, dan sny hy dit ook nie met 'n mes af nie, nee: hy byt die hele stuk tussen sy tande vas en knaag daaraan en ruk en pluk daaraan totdat 'n stuk afbreek. Party slae lyk die ou wie se twak dit is, maar mismoedig as hy sy stuk terugkry, en dan sê hy sarkasties:

„Jong, gee my liewers die pruimpie—dan vat jy vir jou die stuk.”

Die strate en lanings was die ene modder, net waar jy kyk of trap — modder so swart soos teer, en ampertjies 'n voet diep op party plekke; maar in elk geval ten minste twee, drie duim diep op enige plek. En orals is daar varke aan die snork en rondvroetcl. 'n Modde- rige sog met 'n streep kleintjies sou op haar dooie gemak in die straat aankom en dan sommer daar in die middel van die looppad gaan neerplaps, sodat die mense moet draaie loop om verby te kom. En sy bly maar lê, heerlik uitgestrek, haar oë toe, haar ore aan die waai, terwyl die kleintjies staan en drink—so salig asof sy betaal word daarvoor. Na 'n rukkie hoor jy dan skielik: „Haai, sá! Vat hom!” En met 'n onaardse geskreeu gee die sog dan pad, met een of twee honde swaai-swaai aan elke oor, en 'n paar dosyn ander agter- na; dan kom al die leegleërs orent om te staan en kyk tot die spul wegraak, en lag oor die petalje en lyk hoog in hulle skik met die lawaai. En dan leun hulle maar weer terug totdat 'n paar honde dalk aan die baklei raak. Daar was niks op aarde wat hulle só kon wakker maak en laat belang stel as juis 'n hondegeveg nie. Die enigste ander manier om hulle só gaande te kry, was om 'n rondloopbrak met terpentyn te smeer en hom aan die brand te steek, of om 'n blikpan aan sy stert vas te maak en te kyk hoe hy hom dood hardloop.

Aan die waterkant was daar 'n paar huise wat heeltemal vooroor- geleun het, half inmekaargesak en krom en skeef, net reg om in te val. Die mense het al padgegee uit hulle uit. Onder 'n paar ander huise was die wal al uitgekwalwer sodat hulle heeltemal oor die rand geleun het. Maar in hulle het daar nog mense gewoon, al was dit deksels gevaarlik—want partykeer val 'n stuk grond so breed soos 'n huis sommer met een slag in. Soms begin 'n lang strook grond van 'n goeie kwartmyl breed al in die lengte langs insak, totdat die hele stuk een somer in die rivier tuimel. 'n Dorp soos dié moet altyd maar terugskuiwe, terug, terug, terug, want die rivier is alewig aan die knaag daaraan.

Hoe nader dit dié dag aan die middag gekom het, hoe dikker het die stroom waens en perde in die strate beweeg, en nog steeds was die mense aan die kom. Baie gesinne het sommer middagete van die plaas af saamgebring en dit daar op die wa gesit en eet. Daar's ook goed weggelê aan die whisky en ek het drie bakleierye gesien.

Skielik roep iemand: „Hier kom ou Boggs van die plaas af om hom te kom dronk drink. Hy maak mos elke maand so. Hier kom hy, kêrels!”

Al die leegleërs lyk in hulle noppies, asof hulle gewoond is dat ou Boggs hulle 'n bietjie pret besorg. Een van hulle sê:

„Ek wonder met wie hy dié slag gaan skoor soek? As hy al die mense opgefoeter het wat hy die laaste twintig jaar al gedreig het om by te dam, dan was hy sommer ’n beroemde ou.”

Iemand anders sê: „Ek wens ou Boggs wil my ’n slag dreig, dan sal ek weet ek is vir die volgende duisend jaar veilig.”

Boggs kom wild op sy perd aangejaag. Hy skree en gaan te kere nes ’n Rooihuid. „Gee pad daar!” skree hy. „Ek is op die oorlogspad. Die prys van doodskiste gaan styg!”

Hy’s papdrunk en sit en slinger in sy saal. Hy lyk ouer as vyftig, met ’n bloedrooi gesig. Almal skree op horn en lag hom uit en koggel hom, en dan skel hy maar terug en sê hy sal hulle nog almal op- foeter, maar vandag is hy te haastig, want hy’t dorp toe gekom om ou kolonel Sherburn te kom doodmaak; en sy leuse is: „Eers die vleis; daarná lepelkossies.”

Toe gewaar hy my en hy ry tot by my en vra: „En waar kom jy vandaan, boet? Is jy reg om dood te gaan?”

Toe ry hy verder. Ek was skoon verskrik, maar toe sê iemand: „Hy bedoel daar niks mee nie. Hy gaan maar altyd so te kere as hy dronk is. Hy’s eintlik die goedgehartigste ou siel in die hele Arkansas; hy sal nie ’n vlieg seermaak nie—of hy nou dronk of nugter is.”

Boggs ry tot voor die dorp se grootste winkel, en daar steek hy sy kop skuins vorentoe sodat hy onder die stoepgordyntjie kan deurloer, en hy bulder: „Kom uit daar, Sherburn! Kom uit daar en kom kyk vir wie jy verneuk het. Jý’s die hond wat ek op soek is na, en vir jou gaan ek krý!”

En so hou hy aan en hy skel Sherburn vir enigiets onder die son uit, en die hele straat drom vol mense wat luister en lag en te kere gaan. Na ’n ruk kom ’n deftige man van sowat vyf-en-vyftig uit die winkel uit—maklik die man met die mooiste klere in die hele dorp— en die skare val weerskante terug sodat hy kan naderkom.

Baie kalm en stadig sê hy vir Boggs: „Ek is nou sat vir dié affêre. Maar ek sal dit nog tot eenuur toe uithou. Tot eenuur, hoor jy? G’n minuut langer nie. As jy daarná jou mond nog één keer teen my oop- maak, sal ek jou kom haal al vlug jy ook wáárnatoe.”

Toe draai hy om en gaan terug in sy winkel in. Die skare lyk skielik baie bedeesd; niemand roer nie, en daar word nie meer gelag nie. Boggs ry weg, straat-af, en vloek nog een stryk deur op Sherburn; kort daarna kom hy weer terug en hou voor die winkel stil en hou maar aan. ’n Klompie mans drom om hom saam en probeer hom stil kry, maar hy wil nie hoor nie ; hulle sê vir horn dis nog net ’n kwartier voor eenuur en dus móét hy huis toe gaan, sommer nou. Maar dit help nie. Hy hou volstoom aan met swets, so hard as wat hy kan, en hy smyt sy hoed in die modder nêr en ry daaroor, en na ’n rukkje jaag hy weer straat-af dat sy lang grys hare fladder in die wind. Elk- een wat maar naby horn kan kom, probeer horn soebat om van sy perd af te klim sodat hulle horn kan gaan opsluit tot tyd en wyl hy weer nugter is. Maar dit help niks—en na ’n rukkje, hier kóm hy weer straatlangs terug en begin van voor

af op Sherburn skel.

Eindelikstel iemand voor: „Gaan roep sy dogter. Gou! Gaan roep sy dogter. Hy luister partymaal na haar. Sy's die enigste wat hom sal kan stil kry.”

Iemand hardloop daar weg. Ek loop 'n entjie in die straat af en gaan dan weer staan. Omtrent vyf of tien minute later kom Boggs weer verby—maar dié keer nie op sy perd nie. Hy's kaalkop, en kom slinger-slinger na my kant toe aan, met 'n vriend weerskante van hom. Hulle het sy arms beet en help hom oor die weg. Hy is nou doodstil en lyk verleërig, en hy probeer hom glad nie teësit nie—om die waarheid te sê, hy's self besig om te stap so vinnig as wat hy kan.

Eensklaps roep iemand: „Boggs!”

Ek kyk in daardie koers om te sien wie dit is, en gewaar kolonel Sherburn. Hy staan doodstil daar in die straat met 'n rewolwer in sy opgehewe hand—hy vat nie korrel nie, maar hou die loop lug se kant toe. Net toe sien ek 'n jong meisie aangehardloop kom, met twee mans by haar. Boggs en sy helpers het omgeswaai om te sien wie hom geroep het, en toe hulle die rewolwer gewaar, spring die twee mans opsy. Stadig en seker sak die rewolwerloop laer en laer tot dit waterpas lê. Al twee lope is oorgehaal.

Boggs gooi sy hande in die lug en roep: „Ag hemeltjie, moet tog nie skiet nie!”

Boem! klap die eerste skoot en hy steier agteroor met sy hande gryp-gryp in die lug. Boem! Klap die tweede een en met 'n harde, soliede slag val hy agteroor op die grond, met sy arms oopgesprei.

Die jong meisie gil en kom aangehardloop en val huilend op haar pa neer en sê: „Hy't hom vermoor, hy't hom vermoor!” Die mense pak bankvas om hulle saam en druk en beur teen mekaar om met hul langgerekte nekke iets te probeer sien; en die voorstes stamp die agterstes terug en roepaanhoudend: „Tcrug! Terug! Laat hy lug kry, laat hy lug kry!”

Kolonel Sherburn smyt sy rewolwer op die grond neer, draai kort- om en stap weg.

Hulle dra Boggs in 'n klein aptekie in terwyl die skare nog aanhou saamdrom en die hele dorpie probeer agternabeur. Ek het vooruit- gehardloop en gesorg dat ek 'n goeie staanplek by 'n venster kry, waar ek sommer naby hom kon staan en inkyk. Hulle het hom op die vloer neergelê en een groot Bybel onder sy kop ingeskuif, en nog een oopgemaak en op sy bors gesit—maar eers het hulle sy hemp oopgeknop, en ek kon duidelik sien waar een van die koeëls hom getref het. Hy't omtrent twaalf keer diep gehyg, sodat die Bybel op sy borskas elke keer opgestoot is wanneer hy inasem en terugsak wan- neer hy uitasem. Daarna het hy doodstil bly lê. Toe het hulle sy dogter skreeuend en huilend van hom af weggeneem. Sy was omtrent sestien en baie mooi en sag, maar sy was vreeslik bleek en verskrik.

In 'n japtrap was die hele dorp daar aan die beur en stoot en stamp en wriemel om by die venster te probeer kom en in te kyk, maar die mense

voorlans wou nie padgee nie, en agter hulle het die ander klomp aanmekaar geroep: „Toe nou, kêrels, julle’t nou lank genoeg gekyk. Dis nie reg dat julle heelyd daar bly staan en niemand anders ’n kans gee nie. Ander mense het net soveel reg as julle!”

Van voor af is daar net so hard teruggeskel, dus het ek maar weg- geglip ingeval daar dalk moeilikheid kom. Die strate was vol en almal was opgewonde. Dié wat die skietery gesien het, was besig om te vertel hoe dit gebeur het; en rondom elkeen van dié mense was daar ’n hele norring ander wat met gerekte nekke staan en luister het. Een lang skraal man met lang hare en ’n groot wit hoëbol-ferweel- hoed op sy agterkop, was besig om met ’n kromsteelkierie die plekke aan te wys waar Boggs gestaan het, en waar Sherburn gestaan het; en die mense het hom van die een plek na die ander gevolg en alles wat hy gedoen het, aandagtig dopgehou. Hulle het hulle koppe geknik om te wys dat hulle verstaan, en effens vooroorgebuk, met hulle hande op hulle dye, om mooi te kyk hoe hy die plekke op die grond afmerk. Daarna het hy penregop gaan staan waar Sherburn gestaan het, gefrons, sy hoed oor sy oë afgetrek en geskree: „Boggs!” En toe lig hy sy kierie mooi waterpas op en sê: „Boem!” En hy steier agter- uit, sê weer ’n slag „Boem!” en val op sy rug. Die mense wat die moord aanskou het, het gesê dis presies hoe dit gebeur het. Toe het maklik ’n dosyn mans hulle bottels uitgehad, en hom op snapsies begin trakteer.

So ’n ruk later stel iemand skielik voor dat Sherburn opgehang behoort te word. Binne ’n minuut sê almal so. En daar trek hulle, smoorkwaad en skreeuend; en elke wasgoeddraad waarby hulle verbykom, pluk hulle af om vir die ophangery te gebruik.

SECTION 22

They swarmed up the street towards Sherburn's house, a-whooping and yelling and raging like Injuns, and everything had to clear the way or get run over and tromped to mush, and it was awful to see. Children was heeling it ahead of the mob, screaming and trying to get out of the way; and every window along the road was full of women's heads, and there was nigger boys in every tree, and bucks and wenches looking over every fence; and as soon as the mob would get nearly to them they would break and skaddle back out of reach. Lots of the women and girls was crying and taking on, scared most to death.

They swarmed up in front of Sherburn's palings as thick as they could jam together, and you couldn't hear yourself think for the noise. It was a little twenty-foot yard. Some sung out "Tear down the fence! tear down the fence!" Then there was a racket of ripping and tearing and smashing, and down she goes, and the front wall of the crowd begins to roll in like a wave.

Just then Sherburn steps out on to the roofⁱ²¹ of his little front porch, with a double-barrel gun in his hand, and takes his stand, perfectly ca'm and deliberate, not saying a word. The racket stopped, and the wave sucked back.

Sherburn never said a word—just stood there, looking down. The stillness was awful creepy and uncomfortable. Sherburn run his eye slow along the crowd; and wherever it struck, the people tried a little

to outgaze him, but they couldn't; they dropped their eyes and looked sneaky. Then pretty soon Sherburn sort of laughed; not the pleasant kind, but the kind that makes you feel like when you are eating bread that's got sand in it.

Then he says, slow and scornful:

"The idea of *you* lynching anybody! It's amusing. The idea of you thinking you had pluck enough to lynch a *man*! Because you're brave enough to tar and feather poor friendless cast-out women that come along here, did that make you think you had grit enough to lay your hands on a *man*? Why, a *man*'s safe in the hands of ten thousand of your kind—as long as it's daytime and you're not behind him.

"Do I know you? I know you clear through. I was born and raised in the South, and I've lived in the North^{e1}; so I know the average all around. The average man's a coward. In the North he lets anybody walk over him that wants to, and goes home and prays for a humble spirit to bear it. In the South one man, all by himself, has stopped a stage full of men, in the day-time, and robbed the lot. Your newspapers call you a brave people so much that you think you *are* braver than any other people—whereas you're just *as* brave, and no braver. Why don't your juries hang murderers? Because they're afraid the man's friends will shoot them in the back, in the dark—and it's just what they *would* do.

"So they always acquit; and then a *man* goes in the night, with a hundred masked cowards at his back, and lynches the rascal. Your mistake is, that you didn't

bring a man with you; that's one mistake, and the other is that you didn't come in the dark, and fetch your masks. You brought *part* of a man—Buck Harkness, there—and if you hadn't had him to start you, you'd a taken it out in blowing.

“You didn't want to come. The average man don't like trouble and danger. *You* don't like trouble and danger. But if only *half* a man—like Buck Harkness, there—shouts ‘Lynch him, lynch him!’ you're afraid to back down—afraid you'll be found out to be what you are—*cowards*—and so you raise a yell, and hang yourselves onto that half-a-man's coat tail, and come raging up here, swearing what big things you're going to do. The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any *man* at the head of it, is *beneath* pitifulness. Now the thing for *you* to do, is to droop your tails and go home and crawl in a hole. If any real lynching's going to be done, it will be done in the dark, Southern fashion; and when they come they'll bring their masks, and fetch a *man* along. Now *leave*—and take your half-a-man with you”—tossing his gun up across his left arm and cocking it, when he says this.

The crowd washed back sudden, and then broke all apart and went tearing off every which way, and Buck Harkness he heeled it after them, looking tolerable cheap. I could a staid, if I'd a wanted to, but I didn't want to.

I went to the circus, and loafed around the back side till the watchman went by, and then dived in under the

tent. I had my twenty-dollar gold piece and some other money, but I reckoned I better save it, because there ain't no telling how soon you are going to need it, away from home and amongst strangers, that way. You can't be too careful. I ain't opposed to spending money on circuses, when there ain't no other way, but there ain't no use in *wasting* it on them.

It was a real bully circus. It was the splendorous sight that ever was, when they all come riding in, two and two, a gentleman and lady, side by side, the men just in their drawers and under-shirts, and no shoes nor stirrups, and resting their hands on their thighs, easy and comfortable—there must a' been twenty of them—and every lady with a lovely complexion, and perfectly beautiful, and looking just like a gang of real sure-enough queens, and dressed in clothes that cost millions of dollars, and just littered with diamonds. It was a powerful fine sight; I never see anything so lovely. And then one by one they got up and stood, and went a-weaving around the ring so gentle and wavy and graceful, the men looking ever so tall and airy and straight, with their heads bobbing and skimming along, away up there under the tent-roof, and every lady's rose-leafy dress flapping soft and silky around her hips, and she looking like the most loveliest parasol.

And then faster and faster they went, all of them dancing, first one foot stuck out in the air and then the other, the horses leaning more and more, and the ring-master going round and round the centre-pole, cracking his whip and shouting "hi!—hi!" and the clown cracking jokes behind him; and by-and-by all hands dropped the reins, and every lady put her knuckles on

her hips and every gentleman folded his arms, and then how the horses did lean over and hump themselves! And so, one after the other they all skipped off into the ring, and made the sweetest bow I ever see, and then scampered out, and everybody clapped their hands and went just about wild.

Well, all through the circus they done the most astonishing things; and all the time that clown carried on so it most killed the people. The ring-master couldn't ever say a word to him but he was back at him quick as a wink with the funniest things a body ever said; and how he ever *could* think of so many of them, and so sudden and so pat, was what I couldn't noway understand. Why, I couldn't a thought of them in a year. And by-and-by a drunk man tried to get into the ring—said he wanted to ride; said he could ride as well as anybody that ever was. They argued and tried to keep him out, but he wouldn't listen, and the whole show come to a standstill. Then the people begun to holler at him and make fun of him, and that made him mad, and he begun to rip and tear; so that stirred up the people, and a lot of men begun to pile down off of the benches and swarm towards the ring, saying, "Knock him down! throw him out!" and one or two women begun to scream. So, then, the ring-master he made a little speech, and said he hoped there wouldn't be no disturbance, and if the man would promise he wouldn't make no more trouble, he would let him ride, if he thought he could stay on the horse. So everybody laughed and said all right, and the man got on. The minute he was on, the horse begun to rip and tear and jump and cavort around, with two circus men hanging onto his bridle trying to hold him, and the drunk man

hanging onto his neck, and his heels flying in the air every jump, and the whole crowd of people standing up shouting and laughing till the tears rolled down. And at last, sure enough, all the circus men could do, the horse broke loose, and away he went like the very nation, round and round the ring, with that sot laying down on him and hanging to his neck, with first one leg hanging most to the ground on one side, and then t'other one on t'other side, and the people just crazy. It warn't funny to me, though; I was all of a tremble to see his danger. But pretty soon he struggled up astraddle and grabbed the bridle, a-reeling this way and that; and the next minute he sprung up and dropped the bridle and stood! and the horse agoing like a house afire too. He just stood up there, a-sailing around as easy and comfortable as if he warn't ever drunk in his life—and then he begun to pull off his clothes and sling them. He shed them so thick they kind of clogged up the air, and altogether he shed seventeen suits. And then, there he was, slim and handsome, and dressed the gaudiest and prettiest you ever saw, and he lit into that horse with his whip and made him fairly hum—and finally skipped off, and made his bow and danced off to the dressing-room, and everybody just a-howling with pleasure and astonishment.

Then the ring-master he see how he had been fooled, and he *was* the sickest ring-master you ever see, I reckon. Why, it was one of his own men! He had got up that joke all out of his own head, and never let on to nobody. Well, I felt sheepish enough, to be took in so, but I wouldn't a been in that ring-master's place, not for a thousand dollars. I don't know; there may be bullier

circuses than what that one was, but I never struck them yet. Anyways it was plenty good enough for *me*; and wherever I run across it, it can have all of *my* custom, every time.

Well, that night we had *our* show; but there warn't only about twelve people there; just enough to pay expenses. And they laughed all the time, and that made the duke mad; and everybody left, anyway, before the show was over, but one boy which was asleep. So the duke said these Arkansaw lunk-heads couldn't come up to Shakespeare; what they wanted was low comedy—and may be something ruther worse than low comedy, he reckoned. He said he could size their style. So next morning he got some big sheets of wrapping-paper and some black paint, and drawed off some handbills and stuck them up all over the village. The bills said:

AT THE COURT HOUSE!

FOR 3 NIGHTS ONLY!

The World-Renowned Tragedians

DAVID GARRICK THE YOUNGER!

AND

EDMUND KEAN THE ELDER!

Of the London and Continental Theatres,

In their Thrilling Tragedy of

THE KING'S CAMELOPARD²⁵

OR

THE ROYAL NONESUCH!!!

Admission 50 cents.

Then at the bottom was the biggest line of all—which said:

LADIES AND CHILDREN NOT ADMITTED.

“There,” says he, “if that line don’t fetch them, I dont know Arkansaw!”

Chapter 22

Hulle krioel al in die straat langs op na Sherburn se huis toe en gaan soos ’n spul Rooihuide te kere, skreeu en raas dat dit dreun sodat alles net moet padgee voor om nie papgetrap te word nie: ’n vreeslike gedoente. Kinders probeer gillend voor die skare uit padgee; en in elke venster drom daar ’n klomp vrouekoppe saam; in elke boom sit ’n tros klonkies, en oor elke heining loer opge- skote seuns en dogters. Nes die skare té naby kom, gee hulle vinnig pad en maak dat hulle wegkom. ’n Hele klomp van die vrouens en meisiekinders is doodbang aan die huil en te kere gaan.

Voor Sherburn se heining drom hulle saam so dig as wat dit maar kan, en die lawaai is so oorverdowend dat mens jouself nie kan hoor dink nie. Dis ’n klein twintig-voet erfie. ’n Paar mense roep: „Trap die heining plat! Trap die heining plat!” Toe hoor jy net ’n gedruis van breek- en knarsgeluide, die heining word in die grond geloop en die voorste klomp mense bars soos ’n groot brander vorentoe.

Net toe maak Sherburn sy verskyning bo-op die dak van sy voor- stoepie, met ’n dubbelloopgeweer in die hand. Doodkalm en vasbe- rade neem hy daar stelling in, sonder om ’n woord te sê. Die roese- moes bedaar en die golf begin terugstoot.

Sherburn bly nog doodstil staan en afkyk. Die stilte begin nader- hand ongemaklik en grillerig word. Tydsaam kyk Sherburn die skare van kant tot kant deur; waar sy oë op iemand tot stilstand kom, probeer die mense net so kwaai terugkyk, maar hulle kry dit nie reg nie; hulle laat hulle oë gou weer sak en lyk onderduims daaroor. Toe lag Sherburn skielik kortaf; nie ’n aangename laggie nie, maar die soort wat mens laat voel soos wanneer jy brood eet met sand daar- in.

Toe sê hy stadig en minagtend: „Dink julle *julle* kan iemand op- hang? Julie laat my lag. Wat het julle laat dink dat julle genoeg murg in julle pype

het om 'n *man* op te hang? Omdat julle dapper genoeg is om arme verstote papbroeke wat hierlangs verbykom, te teen- en- veer, dink julle miskien daar sit genoeg pit in julle om 'n *man* te pak? Gmf! 'n *Man* sal veilig wees tussen tienduisend van julle soort— solank dit lig is en julle hom nie van agter bekruip nie!

„Dink julle ek ken julle nie? Ek ken julle deur en deur. Ek het in die suide grootgeword en ek het 'n ruk in die noorde gewoon—dis genoeg om die gemiddelde mens te leer ken. Die deursneemens is 'n lafaard. In die noorde laat hy toe dat enigeen op hom trap—en dan loop hy huis toe en bid vir 'n nederige hart om dit te verduur. In die suide het één man al vingeralleen 'n hele poskoets vol mans helder oordag voorgekeer en hulle almal beroof. Julle koerante sanik so oor julle dapperheid dat julle begin dink het julle's regtig dapperder as ander. In werklikheid is julle net so 'dapper' soos hulle—g'n aks meer nie. Hoekom laat julle juries nie moordenaars ophang nie? Omdat hulle bang is daardie man se vriende sal hulle in die donker in die rug kom skiet— en dis presies wat sou gebeur.

„Dan spreek hulle hom maar vry. En dan kry 'n *man* in die nag koers, met honderd gemaskerde papbroeke agter hom aan, en loop hang self die skurk op. Julle't 'n fout gemaak vandag: julle moes 'n *man* met julle saambring het. En julle't nog 'n fout gemaak: julle moes in die donker gekom het, met maskers op. Julle het net 'n stukkie van 'n man saambring—Buck Harkness daar oorkant—en as hy nie daar was om julle op te sweep nie, dan sou julle nou nog net daar staan en raas het.

„Julle wou nie regtig kom nie. Die deursneemens hou nie van moeilikhede en gevaar nie. *Julle* ook nie. Maar nes 'n *halwe* man— soos Buck Harkness—die slag skree: ‚Hang hom! Hang hom!‘ dan's julle te bang om tru te staan, want julle's bang die wêreld sal dan uitvind wat julle regtig is: *papbroeke*! Daarom skree julle maar saam en klou aan daardie halwe man se baadjiepante vas en kom raas hier voor my deur oor al die heldedade wat julle gaan verrig. Daar's niks so rampsalig op aarde as 'n massa nie. Dis wat 'n leer ook maar is— 'n massa. Hulle veg nie met moed wat in hulle ingebore is nie, maar met die wat hulle van die massa rondom hulle steel, en dié wat hulle van hul offisiere kry. Maar 'n massa sonder 'n *man* aan die spits is nog erger as rampsalig. Daar's net een ding wat julle nou kan doen: knyp julle sterte tussen julle bene vas en loop huis toe en gaan kruip daar in 'n gat in. As iemand gehang gaan word, dan sal dit in die donker gebeur, soos wat hulle hier in die suide maak; en hulle sal hulle maskers aanhê, met 'n *man* by hulle. Nou toe: maak dat julle wegkom en vat julle halwe man met julle saam!” En met dié woorde lig hy sy geweer oor sy linkerarm en haal dit oor.

Soos jy sê „mes” spoel die skare daar weg en dun uit in klein klompies-klompies wat op hulle beurt omdraai en voet in die wind slaan. En Buck Harkness hoi agterna, taamlik druipstert. Ek kon gebly het as ek wou, maar ek was nie lus nie.

Ek het sirkus toe gegaan en aan die agterkant rondgedrentel totdat die

opsigter verby was, en toe onder die seil deurgekruip. Ek het my goue twintigdollarstuk en 'n paar ander geldstukke by my gehad, maar ek wou dit liewer spaar, want wie weet hoe gou ek dit dalk nodig kon kry—so ver van die huis af tussen 'n klomp vreemdelinge. Mens kan nooit te versigtig wees nie. Ek gee nie om om geld aan sirkusse te bestee as daar g'n ander uitweg is nie, maar dis darem nie nodig om geld op hulle te mors nie.

Dit was nou sommer 'n bul van 'n sirkus. Dit was die bakste ding wat ek nog ooit gesien het toe hulle daar so ingery kom, twee-twee, man en meisie, man en meisie, langs mekaar, die mans net in hulle onderbroeke en frokkies, en nêrens 'n skoen of 'n stiebeuel nie— hulle sit sommer so lig-lig met hulle hande op hulle bobene—seker 'n goeie twintig stuks van hulle; en elke meisie is mooier as mooi, soos 'n spul regte-egte koninginne, met klere wat 'n miljoen dollars gekos het, sommer so tóé van die diamante. Dit was nou sommer wragtig mooi; mooier het ek nog nooit gesien nie. En toe staan hulle een vir een op en ry al in die rondte, so regop en liggies en fyntjies as kan kom, die mans almal lank en trots en penorent, met hulle koppe wat so wip-wip al onder die tentdak verbyskram; en die meisies se roos- blaar-rokkies flap so sag en syerig om hulle heupe, nes die mooiste sambreeltjies wat jy jou kan voorstel.

En toe begin hulle al vinniger en vinniger ry, en hulle begin dans, eers met die een voet in die lug, dan weer die ander een, en die perde leun al skuinser oor en die afrigter tol al om en om die middelpaal en klap sy sweep en skree „Haai! Haai!” en die hanswors maak grappe al agter hom aan; en eindelijk laat al die hande die leisels glip en die meisies sit hulle hande op hulle heupe en die mans vou hulle arms, en die perde leun sekelkrom vooroor. En een na die ander wip daar in die sirkel af en maak die mooiste-mooiste buiging wat jy jou kan voorstel, en draf uit, en die mense klap hande en word omtrent mal.

Dwarsdeur die sirkus het hulle die wonderlikste goed aangevang, en die hele tyd het daardie hanswors sulke kapperjolle gemaak dat die toeskouers hulle omtrent morsdood gelag het. Die seremoniemeester kon hom net niks sê nie: elke slag praat hy terug, en hy sê die snaaks- ste goed wat jy in jou lewe nog gehoor het. Hoe hy aan so 'n klomp goed kon dink, en dit alles sommer so handomkeer, dit was my skoon oor. Ek sou in 'n hele jaar nooit soveel goed kon uitdink nie. Na 'n ruk was daar toe 'n dronk ou wat in die sirkel wou instap—hy wou glo perdry; hy't gesê hy kan net so goed ry soos enigiemand op aarde. Hulle't met hom geredekawel en hom probeer uithou, maar hy wou nie luister nie en die hele vertoning het tot stilstand gekom. Toe het die mense hom begin uitjou en spot en dit het hom woedend gemaak en hy't goed begin breek en rondgooi; dit het die mense die josie in gemaak en 'n hele spul mans het al met die banke langs begin afklouter om hom by te dam, en 'n klomp het geskree: „Slaat hom plat! Smyt hom uit!” en 'n paar vroumense het begin skree. Toe hou die seremoniemeester 'n kort toesprakie en hy sê hy hoop daar sal g'n moeilikheid kom nie, en as die man belowe om nie moles te maak nie,

kan hy ry—as hy op die perd kan bly. Toe lag almal en sê dis orraait, en die ou dronke klim op. Maar net toe hy sit, begin daardie perd vir jou te spring en hoi en agteropskop en te kere gaan, terwyl twee sirkusmense aan die leisels hang om hom in toom te probeer hou; en die ou dronke klou vir lewe en dood aan die nek vas en met elke spring waai sy bene deur die lug; en al wat mens is, gaan regop staan en skree en lag dat die trane rol. En uiteindelik ruk die perd toe skoon van die sirkusmense los en hy begin weghol soos die duiwel self, al in die rondte, al in die rondte, en die swaap op sy rug klou aan sy nek vas. Die een oomblik hang sy bene diékant tot amper op die grond af, die volgende oomblik weer anderkant, en die mense wil mal word. Maar vir my was dit niks snaaks nie; ek het skoon die bewerasie gehad oor die gevaar waarin die ou verkeer. Maar na 'n ruk kry hy dit reg om op die rug te kom en hy vat die leisels vas, en sy lyf slinger heen en weer. Maar toe laat lós hy die leisels en hy spring op sy voete—en daar staan hy—en dit terwyl die perd soos 'n mal ding rondhol. Hy staan maar lekker-lekker daar, asof hy nog nooit in sy lewe dronk was nie. En toe begin hy sy klere uittrek en weg- smyt.

Daar was soveel van die goed, dat die lug skoon tóé was van hulle: altesame sewentien pakke! En daar staan hy toe, lenig en frisgebou, en met die mooiste klere wat jy nóg gesien het, en hy looi daardie perd met sy sambok dat dit sulke opslae maak—en toe wip hy van sy rug af, en buig, en huppel uit na die kleedkamer terwyl die skare skree van plesier en opwindig.

Toe die seremoniemeester agterkom hoe hy uitoorlê is, het hy maar druipstert gelyk, hoor! Dit was al die tyd een van sy eie mense wat die hele ding self gepraakseer het en dit vir niemand vertel het nie. Ek het ook maar bek-af gevoel dat ek my so om die bos laat lei het, maar ek sou sowaar nie vir 'n duisend dollars in die seremoniemeester se skoene wou gestaan het nie. Nou ja, ek weet nie: dalk was daar al bakker sirkusse as daardie een, maar ék het hulle nog nie gesien nie. Dit was meer as goed genoeg vir my; en waar ek dit ook al weer raakloop, kan hulle maar reken op *my* ondersteuning, dis nou seker.

Nou ja, en daardie aand het ons toe *ons* vertoning ook gehou, maar daar was net sowat twaalf mense—net genoeg om ons onkoste te betaal. En boonop het hulle die hele tyd gesit en lag—en dit het die hertog smoorkwaad gemaak. Lank voor die vertoning verby was, het almal weer geloop, behalwe een seun wat aan die slaap geraak het. Dié spul plaasjapies het g'n waardering vir Shakespeare nie, het die hertog gesê: vir hulle moet mens komedie gee—verkieklik iets vrotter as 'n klug, het hy gereken. En hy kon hulle gee wat hulle wou hê. Die volgende more het hy dus 'n paar groot velle bruinpapier te voorskyn gebring, swart verf uit sy tas gehaal en 'n klompie plakgate begin verf. Dié het ons oral in die dorp gaan opplak. Hulle het só gelui:

IN DIE HOFSAAL

VIR NET 3 AANDE *Die wêreldberoemde Akteurs* DAVID GARRICK JUNIOR
EN

EDMUND KEAN SENIOR *Van die Teaters in Londen en Europa, in die*

spannende tragedie:

DIE KONING SE KAMEELLUIPERD oftewel:

MAJESTEIT SONDER WEERGA !!!

Toegang: 50 sent

En heel onder was die grootste en swartste reel van die hele plak- kaat
geverf:

VROUENS EN KINDERS NIE TOEGELAAT

„Nou toe,” het hy gesê. „As dit hulle nie vang nie, eet ek my hoed ”
op.

SECTION 23

Well, all day him and the king was hard at it, rigging up a stage, and a curtain, and a row of candles for footlights; and that night the house was jam full of men in no time. When the place couldn't hold no more, the duke he quit tending door and went around the back way and come onto the stage and stood up before the curtain, and made a little speech, and praised up this tragedy, and said it was the most thrillingest one that ever was; and so he went on a-bragging about the tragedy and about Edmund Kean the Elder, which was to play the main principal part in it; and at last when he'd got everybody's expectations up high enough, he rolled up the curtain, and the next minute the king come aprancing out on all fours, naked; and he was painted all over, ring-streaked-and-striped, all sorts of colors, as splendid as a rainbowⁱ²²ⁱ²³. And—but never mind the rest of his outfit, it was just wild, but it was awful funny. The people most killed themselves laughing; and when the king got done capering, and capered off behind the scenes, they roared and clapped and stormed and haw-hawed till he come back and done it over again; and after that, they made him do it another time. Well, it would a made a cow laugh to see the shines that old idiot cut.

Then the duke he lets the curtain down, and bows to the people, and says the great tragedy will be performed only two nights more, on accounts of pressing London engagements, where the seats is all sold aready for it in Drury Lane; and then he makes

them another bow, and says if he has succeeded in pleasing them and instructing them, he will be deeply obleeged if they will mention it to their friends and get them to come and see it.

Twenty people sings out:

“What, is it over? Is that *all*?”

The duke says yes. Then there was a fine time. Everybody sings out “sold,” and rose up mad, and was agoing for that stage and them tragedians. But a big fine-looking man jumps up on a bench, and shouts:

“Hold on! Just a word, gentlemen.” They stopped to listen. “We are sold—mighty badly sold. But we don’t want to be the laughing-stock of this whole town, I reckon, and never hear the last of this thing as long as we live. *No*. What we want, is to go out of here quiet, and talk this show up, and sell the *rest* of the town! Then we’ll all be in the same boat. Ain’t that sensible?” (“You bet it is!—the jedge is right!” everybody sings out.) “All right, then—not a word about any sell. Go along home, and advise everybody to come and see the tragedy.”

Next day you couldn’t hear nothing around that town but how splendid that show was. House was jammed again, that night, and we sold this crowd the same way. When me and the king and the duke got home to the raft, we all had a supper; and by-and-by, about midnight, they made Jim and me back her out and float her down the middle of the river and fetch her in and hide her about two mile below town.

The third night the house was crammed again—and

they warn't new-comers, this time, but people that was at the show the other two nights. I stood by the duke at the door, and I see that every man that went in had his pockets bulging, or something muffled up under his coat—and I see it warn't no perfumery neither, not by a long sight. I smelt sickly eggs by the barrel, and rotten cabbages, and such things; and if I know the signs of a dead cat being around, and I bet I do, there was sixty-four of them went in. I shoved in there for a minute, but it was too various for me, I couldn't stand it. Well, when the place couldn't hold no more people, the duke he give a fellow a quarter and told him to tend door for him a minute, and then he started around for the stage door, I after him; but the minute we turned the corner and was in the dark, he says:

“Walk fast, now, till you get away from the houses, and then shin for the raft like the dickens was after you!”

I done it, and he done the same. We struck the raft at the same time, and in less than two seconds we was gliding down stream, all dark and still, and edging towards the middle of the river, nobody saying a word. I reckoned the poor king was in for a gaudy time of it with the audience; but nothing of the sort; pretty soon he crawls out from under the wigwam, and says:

“Well, how'd the old thing pan out this time, Duke?”

He hadn't been up town at all.

We never showed a light till we was about ten mile below that village. Then we lit up and had a supper, and the king and the duke fairly laughed their bones loose over the way they'd served them people. The duke says:

“Greenhorns, flatheads! I knew the first house would keep mum and let the rest of the town get roped in; and I knew they’d lay for us the third night, and consider it was *their* turn now. Well, it *is* their turn, and I’d give something to know how much they’d take for it. I *would* just like to know how they’re putting in their opportunity. They can turn it into a picnic, if they want to—they brought plenty provisions.”

Them rascallions took in four hundred and sixty-five dollars in that three nights. I never see money hauled in by the wagon-load like that, before.

By-and-by, when they was asleep and snoring, Jim says:

“Don’t it ’sprise you, de way dem kings carries on, Huck?”

“No,” I says, “it don’t.”

“Why don’t it, Huck?”

“Well, it don’t, because it’s in the breed. I reckon they’re all alike.”

“But, Huck, dese kings o’ ourn is regular rascallions; dat’s jist what dey is; dey’s reglar rascallions.”

“Well, that’s what I’m a-saying; all kings is mostly rascallions, as fur as I can make out.”

“Is dat so?”

“You read about them once—you’ll see. Look at Henry the Eight; this’n ’s a Sunday-School Superintendent to *him*. And look at Charles Second, and Louis Fourteen,

and Louis Fifteen, and James Second, and Edward Second, and Richard Third, and forty more; besides all them Saxon heptarchies that used to rip around so in old times and raise Cain. My, you ought to seen old Henry the Eight when he was in bloom. He was a blossom. He used to marry a new wife every day, and chop off her head next morning. And he would do it just as indifferent as if he was ordering up eggs. ‘Fetch up Nell Gwynn,’ he says. They fetch her up. Next morning, ‘Chop off her head!’ And they chop it off. ‘Fetch up Jane Shore,’ he says; and up she comes. Next morning ‘Chop off her head’—and they chop it off. ‘Ring up Fair Rosamun.’ Fair Rosamun answers the bell. Next morning, ‘Chop off her head.’ And he made every one of them tell him a tale every night; and he kept that up till he had hogged a thousand and one tales that way, and then he put them all in a book, and called it Domesday Book—which was a good name and stated the case. You don’t know kings, Jim, but I know them; and this old rip of ourn is one of the cleanest I’ve struck in history. Well, Henry he takes a notion he wants to get up some trouble with this country. How does he go at it—give notice?—give the country a show? No. All of a sudden he heaves all the tea in Boston Harbor overboard, and whacks out a declaration of independence, and dares them to come on. That was *his* style—he never give anybody a chance. He had suspicions of his father, the Duke of Wellington. Well, what did he do?—ask him to show up? No—drownded him in a butt of mamsey^{e1}, like a cat. Spose people left money laying around where he was—what did he do? He collared it. Spose he contracted to do a thing; and you paid him, and didn’t set down there and see that he done it—what did he

do? He always done the other thing. Spose he opened his mouth—what then? If he didn't shut it up powerful quick, he'd lose a lie, every time. That's the kind of a bug Henry was; and if we'd a had him along 'stead of our kings, he'd a fooled that town a heap worse than ourn done. I don't say that ourn is lambs, because they ain't, when you come right down to the cold facts; but they ain't nothing to *that* old ram, anyway. All I say is, kings is kings, and you got to make allowances. Take them all around, they're a mighty ornery lot. It's the way they're raised."

"But dis one do *smell* so like de nation, Huck."

"Well, they all do, Jim. *We* can't help the way a king smells; history don't tell no way."

"Now de duke, he's a tolerble likely man, in some ways."

"Yes, a duke's different. But not very different. This one's a middling hard lot, for a duke. When he's drunk, there ain't no near-sighted man could tell him from a king."

"Well, anyways, I doan' hanker for no mo' un um, Huck. Dese is all I kin stan'."

"It's the way I feel, too, Jim. But we've got them on our hands, and we got to remember what they are, and make allowances. Sometimes I wish we could hear of a country that's out of kings."

What was the use to tell Jim these warn't real kings and dukes? ^{e2} It wouldn't a done no good; and besides, it was just as I said; you couldn't tell them from the real

kind.

I went to sleep, and Jim didn't call me when it was my turn. He often done that. When I waked up, just at daybreak, he was setting there with his head down betwixt his knees, moaning and mourning to himself. I didn't take notice, nor let on. I knowed what it was about. He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and home-sick; because he hadn't ever been away from home before in his life; and I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so. He was often moaning and mourning that way, nights, when he judged I was asleep, and saying, "Po' little 'Lizabeth! po' little Johnny! its mighty hard; I spec' I ain't ever gwyne to see you no mo', no mo'!" He was a mighty good nigger, Jim was.

But this time I somehow got to talking to him about his wife and young ones; and by-and-by he says:

"What makes me feel so bad dis time, 'uz bekase I hear sumpn over yonder on de bank like a whack, er a slam, while ago, en it mine me er de time I treat my little 'Lizabeth so ornery. She warn't on'y 'bout fo' year ole, en she tuck de sk'yarlet-fever, en had a powful rough spell; but she got well, en one day she was a-stannin' aroun', en I says to her, I says:

"'Shet de do'."

"She never done it; jis' stood dah, kiner smilin' up at me. It make me mad; en I says agin, mighty loud, I says:

“Doan’ you hear me?—shet de do’!”

“She jis’ stood de same way, kiner smilin’ up. I was a-bilin’! I says:

“I lay I *make* you mine!”

“En wid dat I fetch’ her a slap side de head dat sont her a-sprawlin’. Den I went into de yuther room, en ’uz gone ’bout ten minutes; en when I come back, dah was dat do’ a-stannin’ open *yit*, en dat chile stannin’ mos’ right in it, a-lookin’ down and mournin’, en de tears runnin’ down. My, but I *wuz* mad, I was agwyne for de chile, but jis’ den—it was a do’ dat open innerds—jis’ den, ’long come de wind en slam it to, behine de chile, *ker-blam!*—en my lan’, de chile never move’! My breff mos’ hop outer me; en I feel so—so—I doan’ know *how* I feel. I crope out, all a-tremblin’, en crope aroun’ en open de do’ easy en slow, en poke my head in behine de chile, sof en still, en all uv a sudden, I says *pow!* jis’ as loud as I could yell. *She never budge!* Oh, Huck, I bust out a-cryin’ en grab her up in my arms, en say, ‘Oh, de po’ little thing! de Lord God Amighty fo-give po’ ole Jim, kaze he never gwyne to forgive hissself as long’s he live!’ Oh, she was plumb deef en dumb, Huck, plumb deef en dumb—en I’d ben a-treat’n her so!”

Chapter 23

Die hele dag lank was hy en die koning aan die werskaf om ’n verhoog saam te flans, en ’n gordyn op te hang, met ’n ry kerse vir voetligte. En daardie aand was die hele saal in ’n japtrap stampvol manskemse. Toe daar nou nie meer plek was vir ’n muis nie, gee die hertog pad van die voordeur af en loop buite om na die verhoog toe. Hy gaan staan voor die gordyn en hou ’n kort toe- sprakie en hy praat oor die tragedie en

vertel die mense watter spannende ding dit is; en 'n hele ruk lank hou hy so aan met grootpraat oor die stuk en oor Edmund Kean Senior wat die hoofrol daarin speel; en toe hy nou almal goëd nuuskierig het, rol hy die gordyn op. Die volgende oomblik kom die koning daar ingewals—handevier-voet, en poedelkaal; en sy hele lyf is met strepe geverf, al die kleure van die reënboog. En—maar ek hoef nie meer te sê oor sy mondering nie; dit was gruwelooslik, maar dit was verskriklik snaaks. Die mense het hulle amper doodgelag. En toe die koning klaar is met sy bokkespronge en agter die skerms in weggalop, brul en skree en klap en roep hulle totdat hy terugkom en dit weer 'n slag doen; daarna laat hulle hom nóg 'n slag kom.

Dit was ook genoeg om 'n koei te laat lag soos dié ou te kere gegaan het.

Toe laat die hertog weer die gordyn sak en hy buig vir die mense en kondig aan dat die groot tragedie nog net twee aande opgevoer gaan word omdat daar dringende afsprake in Londen op hulle wag (al die kaartjies in Drury Lane is glo al uitverkoop vir die vertoning); en toe buig hy nog 'n slag en hy sê as hy daarin geslaag het om hulle te vermaak en op te voed, sal hy dit hoog waardeer as hulle hul vriende wil aanraai om ook te kom kyk.

Twintig mense skree tegelyk: „Wat, is dit klaar? Is dit al?”

„Ja,” antwoord die hertog. Tóé's daar darem vir jou 'n deurme-kaarspul daar in die saal. Almal skree net „Verkul!” en spring op en bestorm die verhoog en die akteurs. Maar toe spring daar 'n groot man met 'n mooierige gesig op 'n bank en hy roep:

„Wag 'n bietjie! Gee my kans, menere!” Hulle bedaar om na hom te luister. „Kyk, ons is verkul—slegs verkul. Maar ons wil darem nou ook nie uitgelag word deur die res van die dorp nie: dan hoor ons nooit die end daarvan nie. *Nee*. Wat ons wil doen, is dit: ons wil suutjies hier uitgaan en sorg dat ons almal van die vertoning vertel—en dan word die res van die dorp ook om die bos gelei. Dan sit ons almal met dieselfde gebakte pere. Hoe klink dit vir julle?” („Net so! Die regter praat die waarheid!” roep almal.) „Nou goed dan. G'n woord oor die verkullery nie. Gaan net terug huis toe en vertel almal van die pragtige tragedie.”

Die volgende dag kan jy oral in die dorp net één ding hoor: hoe uitstekend daardie vertoning was. Dié aand sit die saal weer stampvol, en ons kul hulle nes die eerste klomp. Toe ek en die koning en die hertog op die vlot terugkom, het ons aandete geëet, en so teen middernag het hulle my en Jim aangesê om uit te stoot na die middel van die rivier toe en so 'n myl of twee ónderkant die dorp weer te gaan wegkruip.

Die derde aand was die saal weer vol—dié slag nie van nuwe mense nie, maar van mense wat die vorige twee aande die vertoning byge-woon het. Ek het saam met die hertog by die deur gestaan en gesien dat elke man wat binnekom iets diks in sy sak het, of iets wat onder sy jas toegehou word. En dit was ook nie laventel nie! Ek kon kruitwaens vol vrot eiers ruik, en vrot koolkoppe en goed; en van wat ek van dooie katte weet, was daar dié aand vier-en-sestig van hulle in die saal. Ek het my net 'n oomblikkie daar

binnekant gewaag, maar ek kon dit nie uithou nie. Dit was net te veel vir my. Nou ja, toe die saal tjok-en-blok vol is, gee die hertog vir iemand 'n kwartdollarstuk en vra hom om net 'n oomblikkie by die deur te staan en hy mik buite om na die verhoogdeur; ek agterna. Maar net toe ons in die donkerte om die hoek is, sê hy:

„Stap nou vinnig tot jy verby die laaste huise is—dan hoi jy vlot toe so gou as wat jou bene jou kan dra!”

Ek het so gemaak; hy ook. En saam-saam het ons by die vlot aan- gekom. Binne twee sekondes was ons doodstil in die donkerte aan die afdrywe op die rivier, ál na die middel se kant toe, sonder dat iemand 'n woord sê. Ek het net begin dink dat die koning maar gaan les opsê daar met die gehoor—maar aikóna: toe ek weer sien, kom hy by die tent uitgekruip en hy vra:

„En hoe't dit toe dié keer gegaan, hertog?”

Hy was nooit eens in die dorp nie!

Ons het g'n lig aangesteek voor ons 'n goeie tien myl onderkant daardie dorp was nie. Toe't ons die lantern aan die brand gekry en geëet, en die koning en die hertog het hulle byna 'n pape gelag oor die manier waarop hulle die mense geflous het.

„Die spul plaasjapies, die pampoenkoppe!” sê die hertog. „Ek het geweet die eerste aand se lot sou hulle snaters hou sodat die res van die dorp ook eers beetgeneem kan word. En ek het geweet hulle gaan ons die derde aand bydam en wraak neem. Nouja—nou *is* dit hulle beurt, en ek sal graag wil weet wat hulle aanvang. Ek sal tog te graag wil weet hoe hulle hulle kans gebruik. Hulle kan natuur- lik piekniek hou as hulle wil—hulle't genoeg kos saamgebring.”

Die twee het in daardie drie aande vierhonderd-vyf-en-sestig dollars ingeoes. Ek het nog nooit soveel wavragte geld gelyk in my lewe gesien nie.

Toe die twee eindelijk salig lê en snork, vra Jim: „Dink jy nie dis half snaaks sos dié konings te kefe gaat nie, Huck?”

„Nee,” sê ek. „Glad nie.”

„Hoekom nie, Huck?”

„Dis mos in hulle bloed, man. Ek dink hulle maak maar almal so!”

„Maar Huck, dié konings van ons is mos yt-en-yt skelms. Dis wat hulle is, ja: skelms.”

„Dis mos wat ek sê: soos dit vir my lyk, is alle konings maar skelms.”

„Rêrig?”

„Lees net 'n slag van hulle, dan sal jy sien. Kyk maar na ou Hendrik die Agste: dié een is 'n Sondagskoolsuperintendent teen hóm. En wat van Karel die Tweede, en Lodewyk die Veertiende, en Lodewyk die Vyftiende, en Jakobus die Tweede, en Edward die Tweede, en Richard die Derde—en hope ander; dis nog behalwe al daardie ou Saksers wat so wild aangekarring en die wêreld omgekeer het. Hemel, jy moes ou Hendrik die Agste gesien het toe hy op sy stukke was. Hy was vir jou 'n entjie mens! Hy't elke dag 'n ander vrou getrou en dan die volgende móre haar kop laat afkap. En hy sou dit sommer so

niwwermaaind doen, asof hy eiers bestel. Bring vir my Nell Gwynn,' sal hy sê. En dan bring hulle haar. En die volgende oggend, dan's dit: „Af met haar kop!’ En hulle kap dit af.

„Bring vir my Jane Shore,' sê hy, en hulle maak so. En die volgende more: „Kap haar kop af,' en hulle kap dit af. „Loop haal vir Mooi Rosamunde,' Mooi Rosamunde kom. Die volgende more: „Af met haar kop!’ En hy laat elkeen van hulle vir hom elke nag 'n storie vertel, en hy hou so aan tot hy 'n duisenden-een stories bymekaar het, en toe sit hy dit almal in 'n boek met die naam van *Die Boek van die Oordeelsdag* —'n goeie naam, wat mens mooi vertel waaroor dit handel. Nee, Jim, jý ken nie konings nie. Ek ken hulle. En die ou bog wat ons hier het, is een van die onskuldigstes wat ek nog in die geskiedenis raakgeloop het. Sien, en toe besluit Hendrik mos hy wil skoor soek met ons land. En wat maak hy ? Laat hulle daarvan weet? Aikona. Sommer so sito-sito smyt hy al die tee in die Bostonse hawe oorboord en hy pluk 'n verklaring van onafhanklikheid uit en hy daag enigiemand uit om te kom baklei. Dis hoe hy te werk gegaan het—hy't nooit 'n ander ou 'n kans gegee nie. Hy't sy eie pa begin verdink—die Hertog van Wellington. En wat maak hy toe? Vra hom om uit te kom met alles? Nooit: hy gaan versuip hom in 'n vaatjie wyn soos 'n kat. En wat dink jy maak hy as mense geld laat rondlê? Steek dit in sy eie sak. En sê nou hy teken 'n kontrak om iets te doen en jy betaal hom daarvoor, maar jy gaan sit nie daarby en kýk dat hy dit doen nie? Dan loop doen hy net mooi die teenoorgestelde ding. En wat dink jy gebeur nes hy sy mond oopmaak ? As hy dit nie báie gou weer toemaak nie, dan glip daar 'n leuen uit. Dis die soort tor

wat *Hendrik* was—en as ons hóm hier gehad het in plaas van ons konings, dan't hy daardie dorp se mense nog méér verkul as dié oues van ons. Ek sê nie ons s'n is twee lammetjies nie—want dit is hulle beslis nié as mens na die koue feite kyk nie; maar teen dáárdie ou ram is hulle sommer nikswerd. So al wat ek sê, is: konings is nou eenmaal konings, en mens moet dit in aanmerking neem. As jy die spul so deurkyk, dan's hulle maar 'n oes spul. Dis omdat hulle so grootgemaak is.”

„Maar dié ou *ruik* dan nes ornêre mense, Huck.”

„Hulle ruik maar almal so, Jim. *Ons* kan nie help dat 'n koning ruik soos hy ruik nie; die geskiedenis sê niks daarvan nie.”

„Die hertog is bietjie skafliker, sos dit my lyk, so op 'n manier.”

„Ja, die hertog is anders. Maar ook nie báie nie. Dié ou is nie so waffers nie. As hy die slag dronk is, sal g'n bysiende man hom van 'n koning kan onderskei nie.”

„Ek lus in elk geval nie nóg van hulle nie, Huck. Ek sallie meer van hulle kan vat nie.”

„Dis nes hoe ek ook voel, Jim. Maar ons sit nou eenmaal met hulle opgeskeep en ons moet maar probeer onthou wat hulle is, en dit in ag probeer neem. Ek wens partykeer mens kan te hore kom van 'n land waar jy g'n konings kry nie.”

Wat sou dit tog help om vir Jim te vertel dat die twee g'n regte konings en hertoë was nie? Net mooi niks. Buitendien, dit was nes ek gesê het: mens kon hulle rêrig nie onderskei van regte konings en hertoë nie.

Ek het gaan slaap en Jim het my nie eers geroep toe dit tyd word vir my wagbeurt nie. Hy't baie maal so gemaak. Toe ek wakker word, teen dagbreek, het hy daar eenkant met sy kop tussen sy knieë gesit en kerm en kla. Maar ek het my nie daaraan gesteur of hom laat agterkom dat ek wakker is nie. Hy was besig om aan sy vrou en kinders daar ver weg te dink, en hy't alleen en hartseer gevoel, want hy was nog nooit tevore in sy lewe weg van die huis af nie; en ek skat hy't maar net soveel van sy familie gehou as witmense van hulle s'n. Ek weet dit klink snaaks, maar ek dink tog dit is so. Hy't baie maal snags, as hy dink ek slaap, so gesit en kerm, en aangehou sê: „Arme ou Liesbetjie! Arme ou Johnnietjie! Dis maar swaar. Ek skat ek gaat julle nooit weer siet nie, nooit weer nie!” Hy was nou rêrig 'n goeie neger, dié Jim.

Maar die more het ek dit tog naderhand reggekry om met hom te begin praat oor sy vrou en sy kleingod. En na 'n rukkie sê hy: „Jy sien, hoekom ek vemôre so sleg voel, is omdat ek ve-effent daar by die wal laans iets soos 'n klap of 'n ding gehoor het, en toe't ek daadlik gedink aan die slag wat ek my klein Liesbet so naar gemishannel het. Sy was 'maar so vier jaar, en sy't skarlakenkoors gekry, somer slég; maar toe't sy weer gesond gewôre, en een dag staat sy so innie huis rond, toe sê ek:

„Maak toe daai deur.”

„Maar sy luister nie. Sy staat net daar en sy smaail so half vir my, en dit maak my toe boos en ek skrou somer hard:

„,Kan jy nie hoor wat ek sê nie? Maak toe daai deur!’

„Maar sy staat nog net so en kyk. Toe kook ek oor, en ek sê vir haar: ‚Ek sal vir jou máák luister!’ En ek gee haar 'n klap lat sy daar trek. Toe loop ek na die kamer laansaan toe en ek bly so 'n tien minute daar; en toe ek trugkom, toe staat daai deur nog allietyd net so oop ennie kind staat amper rég innie deur, so al afkyk-afkyk en aan die hyl lat die trane so loop. Toe's ek da'm behorelik kwaad en ek wil haar net byloop—die deur het binnetoe oopgemaak, sien—toe kom daar 'n wind en hy slaat die deur hier reg agter die kind toe: kar-blááá! En wil jy my glo: die kind roer nie eers nie! My asem was amper tjies weg en ek staat daar en ek voel so—ek weet ook nie *hoe* ek voel nie. Ek sluip daar uit en ek bewoed die heelyd soos 'n riet, en suutjies-suutjies maak ek die deur agter haar oop en ek steek my kop in en toe skrou ek skielik ‚Wha!’ so hard sos ek kan. *En sy roer nie!* Huck, Huck, ek het net daar beginne hyl en haar opgetel en vir haar gesê: ‚Ag, my arme ou dingetjie! Die Liewenheer moet ou Jim tog maar vergewe, want hy sal hom selwers nooit vergewe so lank as wat hy lewe nie!’ Jy sien, Huck, sy was stokdoofstom, ek sê jou, stokdoof- stom—en daar't ek só met haar gestaat en maak!’”

SECTION 24

Next day, towards night, we laid up under a little willow tow-head out in the middle, where there was a village on each side of the river, and the duke and the king begun to lay out a plan for working them towns. Jim he spoke to the duke, and said he hoped it wouldn't take but a few hours, because it got mighty heavy and tiresome to him when he had to lay all day in the wigwam tied with the rope. You see, when we left him all alone we had to tie him, because if anybody happened on him all by himself and not tied, it wouldn't look much like he was a runaway nigger, you know. So the duke said it *was* kind of hard to have to lay roped all day, and he'd cipher out some way to get around it.

He was uncommon bright, the duke was, and he soon struck it. He dressed Jim up in King Lear's outfit—it was a long curtain-calico gown, and a white horse-hair wig and whiskers; and then he took his theatre-paint and painted Jim's face and hands and ears and neck all over a dead dull solid blue, like a man that's been drowned nine days. Blamed if he warn't the horriblest looking outrage I ever see. Then the duke took and wrote out a sign on a shingle so—

*Sick Arab—but harmless when not out of his head*ⁱ²⁴.

And he nailed that shingle to a lath, and stood the lath up four or five foot in front of the wigwam. Jim was satisfied. He said it was a sight better than laying tied a couple of years every day and trembling all over every

time there was a sound. The duke told him to make himself free and easy, and if anybody ever come meddling around, he must hop out of the wigwam, and carry on a little, and fetch a howl or two like a wild beast, and he reckoned they would light out and leave him alone. Which was sound enough judgment; but you take the average man, and he wouldn't wait for him to howl. Why, he didn't only look like he was dead, he looked considerable more than that.

These rascallions wanted to try the Nonesuch again, because there was so much money in it, but they judged it wouldn't be safe, because maybe the news might a worked along down by this time. They couldn't hit no project that suited, exactly; so at last the duke said he reckoned he'd lay off and work his brains an hour or two and see if he couldn't put up something on the Arkansaw village; and the king he allowed he would drop over to t'other village, without any plan, but just trust in Providence to lead him the profitable way—meaning the devil, I reckon. We had all bought store clothes where we stopped last; and now the king put his'n on, and he told me to put mine on. I done it, of course. The king's duds was all black, and he did look real swell and starchy. I never knowed how clothes could change a body^{e1} before. Why, before, he looked like the orneriest old rip that ever was; but now, when he'd take off his new white beaver and make a bow and do a smile, he looked that grand and good and pious that you'd say he had walked right out of the ark, and maybe was old Leviticus himself. Jim cleaned up the canoe, and I got my paddle ready. There was a big steamboat laying at the shore away up under the point, about three mile above town^{e2}—been there a couple of

hours, taking on freight. Says the king:

“Seein’ how I’m dressed, I reckon maybe I better arrive down from St. Louis or Cincinnati, or some other big place. Go for the steamboat, Huckleberry; we’ll come down to the village on her.”

I didn’t have to be ordered twice, to go and take a steamboat ride. I fetched the shore a half a mile above the village, and then went scooting along the bluff bank in the easy water. Pretty soon we come to a nice innocent-looking young country jake setting on a log swabbing the sweat off of his face, for it was powerful warm weather; and he had a couple of big carpet-bags by him.

“Run her nose in shore,” says the king. I done it. “Wher’ you bound for, young man?”

“For the steamboat; going to Orleans.”

“Git aboard,” says the king. “Hold on a minute, my servant ’11 he’p you with them bags. Jump out and he’p the gentleman, Adolphus”—meaning me, I see.

I done so, and then we all three started on again. The young chap was mighty thankful; said it was tough work toting his baggage such weather. He asked the king where he was going, and the king told him he’d come down the river and landed at the other village this morning, and now he was going up a few mile to see an old friend on a farm up there. The young fellow says:

“When I first see you, I says to myself, ‘It’s Mr. Wilks, sure, and he come mighty near getting here in time.’

But then I says again, ‘No, I reckon it ain’t him, or else he wouldn’t be paddling up the river.’ You *ain’t* him, are you?”

“No, my name’s Blodgett—Elexander Blodgett—*Reverend* Elexander Blodgett, I spose I must say, as I’m one o’ the Lord’s poor servants. But still I’m jist as able to be sorry for Mr. Wilks for not arriving in time, all the same, if he’s missed anything by it—which I hope he hasn’t.”

“Well, he don’t miss any property by it, because he’ll get that all right; but he’s missed seeing his brother Peter die—which he mayn’t mind, nobody can tell as to that—but his brother would a give anything in this world to see *him* before he died; never talked about nothing else all these three weeks; hadn’t seen him since they was boys together—and hadn’t ever seen his brother William at all—that’s the deaf and dumb one—William ain’t more than thirty or thirty-five. Peter and George was the only ones that come out here; George was the married brother; him and his wife both died last year. Harvey and William’s the only ones that’s left now; and, as I was saying, they haven’t got here in time.”

“Did anybody send ’em word?”

“Oh, yes; a month or two ago, when Peter was first took; because Peter said then that he sorter felt like he warn’t going to get well this time. You see, he was pretty old, and George’s g’girls was too young to be much company for him, except Mary Jane the red-headed one; and so he was kinder lonesome after George and his wife died, and didn’t seem to care

much to live. He most desperately wanted to see Harvey—and William too, for that matter—because he was one of them kind that can't bear to make a will. He left a letter behind for Harvey, and said he'd told in it where his money was hid, and how he wanted the rest of the property divided up so George's g'girls would be all right—for George didn't leave nothing. And that letter was all they could get him to put a pen to."

"Why do you reckon Harvey don't come? Wher' does he live?"

"Oh, he lives in England—Sheffield—preaches there—hasn't ever been in this country. He hasn't had any too much time—and besides he mightn't a got the letter at all, you know."

"Too bad, too bad he couldn't a lived to see his brothers, poor soul. You going to Orleans, you say?"

"Yes, but that ain't only a part of it. I'm going in a ship, next Wednesday, for Ryo Janeero^{e3}, where my uncle lives."

"It's a pretty long journey. But it'll be lovely; I wisht I was agoing. Is Mary Jane the oldest? How old is the others?"

"Mary Jane's nineteen, Susan's fifteen, and Joanna's about fourteen^{e4}—that's the one that gives herself to good works and has a hare-lip^{e5}."

"Poor things! to be left alone in the cold world so."

"Well, they could be worse off. Old Peter had friends, and they ain't going to let them come to no harm."

There's Hobson, the Babtis' preacher; and Deacon Lot Hovey, and Ben Rucker, and Abner Shackelford, and Levi Bell, the lawyer; and Dr. Robinson, and their wives, and the widow Bartley, and—well, there's a lot of them; but these are the ones that Peter was thickest with, and used to write about sometimes, when he wrote home; so Harvey '11 know where to look for friends when he gets here."

Well, the old man he went on asking questions till he just fairly emptied that young fellow. Blamed if he didn't inquire about everybody and everything in that blessed town, and all about all the Wilkses; and about Peter's business—which was a tanner; and about George's—which was a carpenter; and about Harvey's—which was a dissenting minister^{ee6}; and so on, and so on. Then he says:

"What did you want to walk all the way up to the steamboat for?"

"Because she's a big Orleans boat, and I was afeard she mightn't stop there. When they're deep they won't stop for a hail. A Cincinnati boat will, but this is a St. Louis one."

"Was Peter Wilks well off?"

"Oh, yes, pretty well off. He had houses and land, and it's reckoned he left three or four thousand in cash hid up som'ers."

"When did you say he died?"

"I didn't say, but it was last night."

“Funeral to-morrow, likely?”

“Yes, 'bout the middle of the day.”

“Well, it's all terrible sad; but we've all got to go, one time or another. So what we want to do is to be prepared; then we're all right.”

“Yes, sir, it's the best way. Ma used to always say that.”

When we struck the boat, she was about done loading, and pretty soon she got off. The king never said nothing about going aboard, so I lost my ride, after all. When the boat was gone, the king made me paddle up another mile to a lonesome place, and then he got ashore, and says:

“Now hustle back, right off, and fetch the duke up here, and the new carpet-bags. And if he's gone over to t'other side, go over there and git him. And tell him to git himself up regardless. Shove along, now.”

I see what *he* was up to; but I never said nothing, of course. When I got back with the duke, we hid the canoe and then they set down on a log, and the king told him everything, just like the young fellow had said it—every last word of it. And all the time he was a doing it, he tried to talk like an Englishman; and he done it pretty well^{e7} too, for a slouch. I can't imitate him, and so I ain't agoing to try to; but he really done it pretty good. Then he says:

“How are you on the deaf and dumb, Bilgewater?”

The duke said, leave him alone for that; said he had

played a deaf and dumb person^{e8} on the histrionic boards. So then they waited for a steamboat.

About the middle of the afternoon a couple of little boats come along, but they didn't come from high enough up the river; but at last there was a big one, and they hailed her. She sent out her yawl, and we went aboard, and she was from Cincinnati; and when they found we only wanted to go four or five mile, they was booming mad, and give us a cussing, and said they wouldn't land us. But the king was ca'm. He says:

"If gentlemen kin afford to pay a dollar a mile apiece, to be took on and put off in a yawl, a steamboat kin afford to carry 'em, can't it?"

So they softened down and said it was all right; and when we got to the village, they yawled us ashore. About two dozen men flocked down, when they see the yawl a coming; and when the king says—

"Kin any of you gentlemen tell me wher' Mr. Peter Wilks lives?" they give a glance at one another, and nodded their heads, as much as to say, "What d' I tell you?" Then one of them says, kind of soft and gentle:

"I'm sorry, sir, but the best we can do is to tell you where he *did* live yesterday evening."

Sudden as winking, the ornery old cretur went all to smash, and fell up against the man, and put his chin on his shoulder, and cried down his back, and says:

"Alas, alas, our poor brother—gone, and we never got to see him; oh, it's too, *too* hard!"

Then he turns around, blubbering, and makes a lot of idiotic signs to the duke on his hands, and blamed if *he* didn't drop a carpet-bag and bust out a-crying. If they warn't the beatenest lot, them two frauds, that ever I struck.

Well, the men gethered around, and sympathized with them, and said all sorts of kind things to them, and carried their carpet-bags up the hill for them, and let them lean on them and cry, and told the king all about his brother's last moments, and the king he told it all over again on his hands to the duke, and both of them took on about that dead tanner like they'd lost the twelve disciples. Well, if ever I struck anything like it, I'm a nigger. It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race^{e9}.

Chapter 24

d IE volgende dag so teen die aand se kant, het ons teen 'n klein slonsbankie vol wilgerbome in die middel van die rivier vasgemeer. Aan weerskante op die oewers was daar 'n klein dorpie, en die koning en die hertog was besig om planne te beraam om hulle te bearbei. Jim het 'n slag met die hertog gepraat en vir hom gesê hy hoop dit gaan net 'n paar uur duur, want dis darem vir hom alte swaar en vervelig om die hele liewe dag vasgebind daar in die tent te lê. Want sien, as ons hom alleen op die vlot laat bly het, moes hy mos altyd vasmemaak word, want as iemand dalk daar op hom afkom en hy's nié vas nie, dan sou dit mos nie lyk na 'n wegloop- slaaf nie. Die hertog stem toe saam dat dit bietjie swaar was om heel- dag so vasgebind te lê, en hy belowe dat hy 'n plan sal bedink.

Sy kop was nou rêrig goed aangeskroef, die hertog s'n, en hy't gou-gou 'n plan gehad. Hy't Jim toe in Koning Lear se kostuum uitgevat— 'n lang mantel van gordynstof, met 'n wit pruik en snor en perdestert gemaak; en toe haal hy sy toneelverf uit en hy verf Jim se gesig en sy hande en ore en nek alles 'n dowwerige, duidelike blou, sodat hy lyk soos 'n man wat nege dae verdrink was: die afskuwe- likste onding wat ek nog ooit gesien het. Toe haal die hertog sy skryfgoed uit en hy skryf 'n kennisgewing op 'n plankie:

Siek Arabier—maar Onskadelik behalwe wanneer hy Mal is.

Dié plankie spyker hy aan 'n lat vas en die lat maak hy so 'n vier of vyf voet voor die tent staan. Jim was doodtevrede daarmee. Dit was veel beter as om elke dag 'n paar jaar lank vasgebind te lê en elke slag die bewerasie te kry nes hy 'n geluid hoor. Die hertog het gesê hy kan nou maar op sy dooie gemak hier rondlê, en as daar dalk iemand kom lol, moet hy net by die tent uitspring en 'n bietjie rond- dans en te kere gaan en 'n paar keer soos 'n wilde dier skree—dan behoort die lasposte pad te gee en hom met rus te laat. En ek dink dit was heeltemal goed geoordeel: 'n gewone mens sou nie eers wag dat hy begin skree nie. Want sien, hy het nie net gelyk of hy dood was nie—hy't sommer heelwat érger gelyk.

Die skurke wou weer die „Majesteit sonder Weerga” probeer om- dat daar soveel geld in gesteeke het, maar hulle't gereken dis dalk nie veilig nie, want dalk het die nuus teen dié tyd al hierlangs aangekom. Hulle kon eintlik aan niks dink wat mooi nommerpas was nie, daar- om het die hertog besluit om eers nog so 'n uur of twee sy kop te laat werk om iets te prakseer wat hy op die Arkansas-dorpie kan uithaal. En die koning het besluit om oor te ry na die oorkantste dorpie, sonder enige vaste plan, en om maar op die Voorsienigheid te reken om hom op die regte pad te lei (ek skat hy't eintlik bedoel: die duiwel). By ons vorige stilhouplek het ons almal nuwe klere gekoop en die koning het nou syne aangetrek, en my beveel om myne ook aan te trek. Ek het dit natuurlik dadelik gedoen. Die koning se pak was gitswart en hy't sommer windmaker gelyk. Ek het nooit tevore besef dat klere mens só kan verander nie. Gits, voorheen het hy nou rêrig 'n oes ou uitvaagsel gelyk; maar nou, as hy 'n slag daardie nuwe wit bewerhaarhoed van hom afhaal en hy buig en glimlag, dan't hy so goed en deftig en godvresend gelyk dat jy sou sweer hy kom nou reguit uit die ark uit, asof hy ou Levitikus in lewende lywe was. Jim het die kano skoongemaak en ek het my roeispaantjie vasgevat. So 'n ent hoër op teen die wal, 'n goeie drie myl bokant die dorpie, het daar nou al 'n paar uur lank 'n stoomboot gelê, besig om vrag te laai.

Toe sê die koning: „Terwyl ek nou so aangetrek is, is dit dalk beter as ek van St. Louis of Cincinnati of 'n ander groot plek af kom. Roei so na die stoomboot se kant toe, Huckleberry; ons sal met dié ding dorp toe ry.”

Dit was nie nodig om my dit twee keer te sê nie—hene, om te dink ek gaan nou stoomboot ry! So 'n halfmyl bokant die dorp het ek oewer toe geswenk en daar al met die hoë wal langs in die stil water gehou. Na 'n rukkie gewaar ons 'n jong plaasboertjie met 'n mooi onskuldige gesig, wat daar op 'n stomp sit en sweet afvee—want dit was kwaai warm; by hom het hy 'n paar groot tasse.

„Wal toe,” sê die koning. Ek maak so. „Waar's jy op pad heen, kêrel ?”

„Stoomboot toe, op pad na Orleans.”

„Klim in,” sê die koning. „Wag 'n bietjie: my bediende sal jou met die tasse help. Spring uit en help die man, Adolphus,” sê hy vir my.

Ek maak so en ons drie ry toe saam verder. Die jongkêrel was baie

dankbaar: dit was alte swaar werk om in dié weer sy swaar tasse aan te piekel. Hy wou van die koning weet waar dié op pad heen is, en die koning vertel hom toe hy het met die rivier af gekom en by die ander dorpie aan wal gegaan; nou was hy op pad na 'n ou vriend van hom toe wat 'n paar myl hoër op 'n plaas gehad het.

„Toe ek u die eerste maal sien,” antwoord die jongkêrel, „het ek by myself gedink: ‚Dit moet meneer Wilks wees. Hy was so amper- amper betyds.’ Maar toe dink ek weer: ‚Nee, ek skat dis nie hy nie, want hy sal mos nie stroom-op roei nie.’ U is mos nie Wilks nie, nê?”

„Nee, my naam is Blodgett—Elexander Blodgett—*Dominee* Elexander Blodgett, behoort ek seker te sê, want ek is een van die Here se arme diensknegte. Maar ek is nietemin net so jammer dat meneer Wilks nie betyds was nie, as dit beteken dat hy dalk iets mis- geloop het—wat ek werklik nie hoop nie.”

„Wel, hy’t g’n eiendom misgeloop nie, want dié sal hy kry; maar hy’t die dood van sy broer Peter misgeloop. Dalk maak dit nie vir hóm saak nie, wie weet? Maar sy arme broer sou enigiets ter wêreld gegee het om hóm weer te sien voor hy doodgaan. Hulle’t mekaar laas gesien toe hulle seuns was; en hy’t nooit eers sy broer William gesien nie—dis die doofstomme—William kan nie meer as so dertig, vyf-en-dertig wees nie. Dis net Peter en George wat hiernatoe gekom het; George was die getroude broer; hy en sy vrou is altwee laasjaar dood. Nou’s net Harvey en William oor; en soos ek sê, hulle was nie betyds nie.”

„Het enigiemand hulle laat weet?”

„O ja, twee maande gelede al toe Peter die eerste keer siek geword het, want Peter het gesê hy’t ’n gevoel hy gaan nie dié keer weer gesond word nie. Sien, hy was al ouerig, en George se dogters was nie veel van ’n aanspraak vir hom nie, behalwe die rooikop, Mary-Jane; en dus was hy maar taamlik eensaam ná George en sy vrou dood is, en hy’t nie meer veel omgee om te bly lewe nie. Hy wou Harvey dringend weer sien—vir William ook, om die waarheid te sê—want hy’s een van die mense wat nie daarvan hou om ’n testament te maak nie. Hy’t ’n brief vir Harvey laat bly en gesê hy sou daarin vertel waar hy sy geld weggesteek het; en die res van sy besittings moes glo verdeel word sodat George se dogters geholpe kan wees, want George self het niks nagelaat nie. Daardie brief was ál wat hulle hom ooit aan die skryf gekry het.”

„Hoekom dink jy kom Harvey dan nie? Waar woon hy?”

„O, in Engeland—Sheffield—predikant daar. Was nog nooit in dié land nie. Hy’t nie juis genoeg tyd gehad nie, en dalk het hy nooit eers die brief gekry nie, sien u ?”

„Dis tog te jammer, tog te jammer dat hy nou moes sterwe sonder om sy broers te sien, arme siel. Jy’s op pad na Orleans, het jy gesê?” „Ja, maar dis net die eerste skof. Volgende Woensdag haal ek die skip Rio de Janeiro toe. My oom woon daar.”

„Dis ver, nê? Maar dit sal heerlik wees. Ek wens ek kon soontoe gaan. Is Mary-Jane die oudste? Hoe oud is die ander?”

„Mary-Jane is neëntien, Susan is vyftien en Joanna omtrent veertien—sy’s die een wat al haar tyd aan goeie werke wy, die een met die haaslip.”

„Arme goed, om so alleen in die koue wêreld agtergelaat te word.” „Hulle kon dit darem slegter getref het. Ou Peter het heelwat vriende gehad en hulle sal sorg dat daar niks met die dogters gebeur nie. Daar’s Hobson, die Wederdoperpredikant, en Diaken Lot Hovey, en Ben Rucker, en Abner Shackleford, en Levi Bell die prokureur; en daar’s dokter Robinson, en al hulle vrouens, en wedu- wee Bartley, en—ag, ’n hele klomp. Maar dis nou die paar wat Peter se beste vriende was en van wie hy partykeer vertel het as hy huis toe skrywe; so Harvey sal weet waar om vriende te soek as hy hier aankom.”

Die oubaas hou maar aan met vrae vra tot hy die jongkêrel omtrent leeggepomp het. Goeiste, hy’t behoorlik oor ’n ieder en ’n elk in daardie simpele ou dorpie uitgevra, en alles oor die Wilkse, en oor Peter se werk—hy was ’n leerlooier; en oor George s’n—hy was ’n skrynwerker; en oor Harvey s’n—hy was ’n Dissenterpredikant; ensovoorts, ensovoorts.

Toe vra hy: „Hoekom wou jy dan die hele ent pad oploop na die stoomboot toe?”

„Omdat dit ’n groot Orleans-boot is en ek was bang hy sou nie by die dorp stilhou nie. As hulle te ver van die wal af vaar, hou hulle net nie stil as jy waai nie. Cincinnati-bote, ja, maar dié een kom van St. Louis af.”

„Was Peter Wilks ’n welgestelde man?”

„O ja, taamlik. Hy’t huise gehad, en grond, en die mense meen hy’t mecr as vierduisend dollar kontant iewers wcggesteek.”

„En hoe’t jy gesê: wannecr is hy dood?”

„Ek het nie gesê nie, maar dit was gisteraand.”

„Die begrafnis is dan seker more?”

„Ja, so teen die middag.”

„Ag ja, dis bitter, bitter treurig; maar ons moet almal vroeër of later gaan. Die beste is maar om voorbereid te wees, dan is alles reg.” „Ja, meneer, dis die heel beste. Ma het ook altyd so gesê.”

Toe ons by die boot aankom, was die laaiery net mooi klaar, en kort daarna is hulle vort. Die koning het g’n woord gesê oor aan boord gaan nie, dus was ek my ritjie in elk geval kwy. Ná die boot weg is, het die koning my nog omtrent ’n myl laat aanroei na ’n verlate stukkie wal, daar uitgeklim en gesê:

„Roei nou gou terug en bring die hertog en die nuwe tasse hierna- toe. As hy al weg is na die oorkantste dorp toe, loop haal hom daar. En sê vir hom wáarmee hy ook al besig is, hy moet opskud. Toe, weg is jy!”

Ek kon goed sien wat daar in sý kop omgaan, maar ek sê natuurlik niks. Toe ek terugkom met die hertog, steek ons eers die kano weg en daarna gaan sit hulle twee op ’n stomp hout en die koning vertel hom alles wat die

jongkêrel vir hom gesê het—elke lieue ding. En die hele tyd terwyl hy vertel, probeer hy Soos 'n Engelsman praat—en hy kry dit nogal goed reg ook, as mens dink wat se skooier hy is. Ek kan hom nie namaak nie, dus gaan ek nie eers probeer nie—maar hy't dit rêrig goed gedoen.

Eindelik vra hy: „Hoe's jy met doofstommigheid, Bilgewater?” Doodreg, verseker die hertog hom: hy hoef nie oor hóm bekom- merd te wees nie. Hy't tevore al die rol van 'n doofstomme op die planke vertolk. Toe gaan sit hulk en wag dat die stoomboot moet opdaag.

So halfpad deur die middag kom daar 'n paar kleinerige bootjies verby, maar hulle't nie van ver genoeg gekom nie; eindelijk was daar egter 'n grote waarvoor hulle kon wuif. Die boot het 'n roeiskuitjie wal toe gestuur en ons is aan boord, en daar hoor ons die boot kom van Cincinnati af; toe hulle uitvind dat ons net vier of vyf myl ver wil ry, klim hulle ons woedend in en dreig om glad nie te land nie.

Maar die koning hoor dit alles doodkalm aan en sê dan: „As daar here is wat bereid is om 'n dollar per myl te betaal en per roeiskuit opgelaa en aan wal gesit te word, behoort 'n stoomboot tog seker in staat te wees om hulle te vervoer?”

Toe bedaar hulle en sê dis goed; en toe ons by die dorpie aankom, stuur hulle ons in 'n skuit wal toe. 'n Goeie twee dosyn mans het haastig nadergestaan toe hulle die skuit sien aankom.

Die koning vra: „Kan enigeen van u my sê waar meneer Peter Wilks woon?” Die mans loer vinnig na mekaar en knik dan, asof hulle wil sê: „Ek het jou mos gesê!” En eindelijk sê een van hulle bale sag en vriendelik: „Dit spyt my, meneer, maar al wat ons kan doen, is om vir u te sê waar hy tot gisteraand toe nog gewoon het.”

Sommer so handomkeer is dit of die oubaas heeltemal in duie stort. Hy druk sy ken op die man se skouer vas en huil so half oor sy rug, en sê: „Foei, foei, ons arme broer—weg sonder dat ons hom kon sien! O, dis net te vreeslik!”

Toe draai hy half onnosel om, tranerig en stotterig, en hy maak vir die hertog 'n klomp verspotte gebare met sy hande—en daar laat die toe sy tas net daar val en bars in trane uit. Sowat soos dié twee skurke het ek sowaar nog nooit gesien nie.

Nou ja, die mans drom daar saam en begin met hulle simpatiseer en sê vir hulle allerhande goed, en dra hulle tasse teen die skuinste uit, en laat hulle op hul arms leun om te huil; en hulle vertel die koning alles van sy broer se laaste oomblikke, en die koning tolk dit weer met sy hande vir die hertog, en hulle gaan te kere oor daardie dooie leerlooier asof hulle die twaalf dissipels verloor het. Nee kyk, dit was my skoon oor. Dit was genoeg om mens skaam te maak vir die hele mensdom.

SECTION 25

The news was all over town in two minutes, and you could see the people tearing down on the run, from every which way, some of them putting on their coats as they come. Pretty soon we was in the middle of a crowd, and the noise of the tramping was like a soldier-march. The windows and dooryards was full; and every minute somebody would say, over a fence:

“Is it *them*?”

And somebody trotting along with the gang would answer back and say.

“You bet it is.”

When we got to the house, the street in front of it was packed, and the three girls was standing in the door. Mary Jane was red-headed, but that don't make no difference, she was most awful beautiful^{e1}, and her face and her eyes was all lit up like glory, she was so glad her uncles was come. The king he spread his arms, and Mary Jane she jumped for them, and the hare-lip jumped for the duke, and there they *had* it! Everybody most, leastways women, cried for joy to see them meet again at last and have such good times.

Then the king he hunched the duke, private—I see him do it—and then he looked around and see the coffin, over in the corner on two chairs; so then, him and the duke, with a hand across each other's shoulder, and t'other hand to their eyes, walked slow and solemn over there, everybody dropping back to give them

room, and all the talk and noise stopping, people saying “Sh!” and all the men taking their hats off and drooping their heads, so you could a heard a pin fall. And when they got there, they bent over and looked in the coffin, and took one sight, and then they bust out a crying so you could a heard them to Orleans, most; and then they put their arms around each other’s necks, and hung their chins over each other’s shoulders; and then for three minutes, or maybe four, I never see two men leak^{e2} the way they done. And mind you, everybody was doing the same; and the place was that damp I never see anything like it. Then one of them got on one side of the coffin, and t’other on t’other side, and they kneeled down and rested their foreheads on the coffin, and let on to pray all to themselves. Well, when it come to that, it worked the crowd like you never see anything like it, and so everybody broke down and went to sobbing right out loud—the poor girls, too; and every woman, nearly, went up to the girls, without saying a word, and kissed them, solemn, on the forehead, and then put their hand on their head, and looked up towards the sky, with the tears running down, and then busted out and went off sobbing and swabbing, and give the next woman a show. I never see anything so disgusting.

Well, by-and-by the king he gets up and comes forward a little, and works himself up and slobbers out a speech, all full of tears and flapdoodle about its being a sore trial for him and his poor brother to lose the diseased^{e3}, and to miss seeing diseased alive, after the long journey of four thousand mile, but its a trial that’s sweetened and sanctified to us by this dear sympathy and these holy tears, and so he thanks them

out of his heart and out of his brother's heart, because out of their mouths they can't, words being too weak and cold, and all that kind of rot and slush, till it was just sickening; and then he blubbers out a pious goody-goody Amen, and turns himself loose and goes to crying fit to bust.

And the minute the words was out of his mouth somebody over in the crowd struck up the doxolojer^{e4}, and everybody joined in with all their might, and it just warmed you up and made you feel as good as church letting out. Music *is* a good thing; and after all that soul-butter and hogwash, I never see it freshen up things so, and sound so honest and bully.

Then the king begins to work his jaw again, and says how him and his nieces would be glad if a few of the main principal friends of the family would take supper here with them this evening, and help set up with the ashes of the diseased; and says if his poor brother laying yonder could speak, he knows who he would name, for they was names that was very dear to him, and mentioned often in his letters; and so he will name the same, to-wit, as follows, vizz:—Rev. Mr. Hobson, and Deacon Lot Hovey, and Mr. Ben Rucker, and Abner Shackleford, and Levi Bell, and Dr. Robinson, and their wives, and the widow Bartley.

Rev. Hobson and Dr. Robinson was down to the end of the town, a-hunting together; that is, I mean the doctor was shipping a sick man to t'other world, and the preacher was pinting him right. Lawyer Bell was away up to Louisville on some business. But the rest was on hand, and so they all come and shook hands with the king and thanked him and talked to him; and

then they shook hands with the duke, and didn't say nothing but just kept a-smiling and bobbing their heads like a passel of sapheads whilst he made all sorts of signs with his hands and said "Goo-goo—goo-goo-goo," all the time, like a baby that can't talk.

So the king he blatted along, and managed to inquire about pretty much everybody and dog in town, by his name, and mentioned all sorts of little things that happened one time or another in the town, or to George's family, or to Peter; and he always let on that Peter wrote him the things, but that was a lie, he got every blessed one of them out of that young flathead that we canoed up to the steamboat.

Then Mary Jane she fetched the letter her father left behind, and the king he read it out loud and cried over it. It give the dwelling-house and three thousand dollars, gold, to the girls; and it give the tanyard (which was doing a good business), along with some other houses and land (worth about seven thousand), and three thousand dollars in gold to Harvey and William, and told where the six thousand cash was hid, down cellar. So these two frauds said they'd go and fetch it up, and have everything square and above-board; and told me to come with a candle. We shut the cellar door behind us, and when they found the bag they spilt it out on the floor, and it was a lovely sight, all them yaller-boys^{e5}. My, the way the king's eyes did shine! He slaps the duke on the shoulder, and says:

"Oh, *this* ain't bully, nor noth'n! Oh, no, I reckon not! Why, Biljy, it beats the Nonesuch, *don't* it!"

The duke allowed it did. They pawed the yaller-boys,

and sifted them through their fingers and let them jingle down on the floor; and the king says:

“It ain’t no use talkin’; bein’ brothers to a rich dead man, and representatives of furrin heirs that’s got left, is the line for you and me, Bilge. Thish-yer comes of trust’n to Providence. It’s the best way, in the long run. I’ve tried ’em all, and ther’ ain’t no better way.”

Most everybody would a been satisfied with the pile, and took it on trust; but no, they must count it. So they counts it, and it comes out four hundred and fifteen dollars short. Says the king:

“Dern him, I wonder what he done with that four hunderd and fifteen dollars?”

They worried over that a while, and ransacked all around for it. Then the duke says:

“Well, he was a pretty sick man, and likely he made a mistake—I reckon that’s the way of it. The best way’s to let it go, and keep still about it. We can spare it.”

“Oh, shucks, yes, we can *spare* it. I don’t k’yer noth’n ’bout that—it’s the *count* I’m thinkin’ about. We want to be awful square and open and above-board, here, you know. We want to lug this h-yer money up stairs and count it before everybody—then ther’ ain’t noth’n suspicious. But when the dead man says ther’s six thous’n dollars, you know, we don’t want to——”

“Hold on,” says the duke. “Less make up the deffisit”—and he begun to haul out yaller-boys out of his pocket.

“It’s a most amaz’n’ good idea, duke—you *have* got a

rattlin' clever head on you," says the king. "Blest if the old Nonesuch ain't a heppin' us out agin"—and *he* begun to haul out yaller-jackets and stack them up.

It most busted them, but they made up the six thousand clean and clear^{e6}.

"Say," says the duke. "I got another idea. Le's go up stairs and count this money, and then take and *give it to the girls*."

"Good land, duke, lemme hug you! It's the most dazzling idea 'at ever a man struck. You have cert'nly got the most astonishin' head I ever see. Oh, this is the boss dodge^{e7}, ther' ain't no mistake 'bout it. Let 'em fetch along their suspicions now, if they want to—this'll lay 'em out."

When we got up stairs, everybody gethered around the table, and the king he counted it and stacked it up, three hundred dollars in a pile—twenty elegant little piles. Everybody looked hungry at it, and licked their chops. Then they raked it into the bag again, and I see the king begin to swell himself up for another speech. He says:

"Friends all, my poor brother that lays yonder, has done generous by them that's left behind in the vale of sorrers. He has done generous by these-yer poor little lambs that he loved and sheltered, and that's left fatherless and motherless. Yes, and we that knowed him, knows that he would a done *more* generous by 'em if he hadn't ben afeard o' woundin' his dear William and me. Now, *wouldn't* he? Ther' ain't no question 'bout it, in *my* mind. Well, then—what kind o' brothers would it be, that 'd stand in his way at sech a

time? And what kind o' uncles would it be that 'd rob—yes, *rob*—sech poor sweet lambs as these 'at he loved so, at sech a time? If I know William—and I *think* I do—he—well, I'll jest ask him.” He turns around and begins to make a lot of signs to the duke with his hands; and the duke he looks at him stupid and leather-headed a while, then all of a sudden he seems to catch his meaning, and jumps for the king, goo-gooing with all his might for joy, and hugs him about fifteen times before he lets up. Then the king says, “I knowed it; I reckon *that* 'll convince anybody the way *he* feels about it. Here, Mary Jane, Susan, Joanner, take the money—take it *all*. It's the gift of him that lays yonder, cold but joyful.”

Mary Jane she went for him, Susan and the hare-lip went for the duke, and then such another hugging and kissing I never see yet. And everybody crowded up with the tears in their eyes, and most shook the hands off of them frauds, saying all the time:

“You *dear* good souls!—how *lovely*!—how *could* you!”

Well, then, pretty soon all hands got to talking about the diseased again, and how good he was, and what a loss he was, and all that; and before long a big iron-jawed man worked himself in there from outside, and stood a listening and looking, and not saying anything; and nobody saying anything to him either, because the king was talking and they was all busy listening. The king was saying—in the middle of something he'd started in on—

“—they bein' partickler friends o' the diseased. That's why they're invited here this evenin'; but to-morrow we

want *all* to come—everybody; for he respected everybody, he liked everybody, and so it's fitten that his funeral orgies^{e8} sh'd be public."

And so he went a-mooning on and on, liking to hear himself talk, and every little while he fetched in his funeral orgies again, till the duke he couldn't stand it no more; so he writes on a little scrap of paper, "*obsequies*, you old fool," and folds it up and goes to goo-gooing and reaching it over people's heads to him. The king he reads it, and puts it in his pocket, and says:

"Poor William, afflicted as he is, his *heart's* aluz right. Asks me to invite everybody to come to the funeral—wants me to make 'em all welcome. But he needn't a worried—it was jest what I was at."

Then he weaves along again, perfectly ca'm, and goes to dropping in his funeral orgies again every now and then, just like he done before. And when he done it the third time, he says:

"I say orgies, not because it's the common term, because it ain't—obsequies bein' the common term—but because orgies is the right term. Obsequies ain't used in England no more, now—it's gone out. We say orgies now, in England. Orgies is better, because it means the thing you're after, more exact. It's a word that's made up out'n the Greek *orgo*, outside, open, abroad; and the Hebrew *jeesum*, to plant, cover up; hence *inter*. So, you see, funeral orgies is an open er public funeral."

He was the *worst* I ever struck. Well, the iron-jawed man he laughed right in his face. Everybody was

shocked. Everybody says, “Why *doctor!*” and Abner Shackleford says:

“Why, Robinson, hain’t you heard the news? This is Harvey Wilks.”

The king he smiled eager, and shoved out his flapper, and says:

“Is it my poor brother’s dear good friend and physician? I—”

“Keep your hands off of me!” says the doctor. “*You* talk like an Englishman—*don’t* you? It’s the worse imitation I ever heard. *You* Peter Wilks’s brother. You’re a fraud, that’s what you are!”

Well, how they all took on! They crowded around the doctor, and tried to quiet him down, and tried to explain to him, and tell him how Harvey’d showed in forty ways that he *was* Harvey, and knowed everybody by name, and the names of the very dogs, and begged and *begged* him not to hurt Harvey’s feelings and the poor girls’ feelings, and all that; but it warn’t no use, he stormed right along, and said any man that pretended to be an Englishman and couldn’t imitate the lingo no better than what he did, was a fraud and a liar. The poor girls was hanging to the king and crying; and all of a sudden the doctor ups and turns on *them*. He says:

“I was your father’s friend, and I’m your friend; and I warn you *as* a friend, and an honest one, that wants to protect you and keep you out of harm and trouble, to turn your backs on that scoundrel, and have nothing to do with him, the ignorant tramp, with his idiotic Greek

and Hebrew as he calls it. He is the thinnest kind of an impostor—has come here with a lot of empty names and facts which he has picked up somewhere, and you take them for *proofs*, and are helped to fool yourselves by these foolish friends here, who ought to know better. Mary Jane Wilks, you know me for your friend, and for your unselfish friend, too. Now listen to me; turn this pitiful rascal out—I *beg* you to do it. Will you?”

Mary Jane straightened herself up, and my, but she was handsome! She says:

“*Here* is my answer.” She hove up the bag of money and put it in the king’s hands, and says, “Take this six thousand dollars, and invest it for me and my sisters any way you want to, and don’t give us no receipt for it.”

Then she put her arm around the king on one side, and Susan and the hare-lip done the same on the other. Everybody clapped their hands and stomped on the floor like a perfect storm, whilst the king held up his head and smiled proud. The doctor says:

“All right. I wash *my* hands of the matter. But I warn you all that a time’s coming when you’re going to feel sick whenever you think of this day”—and away he went.

“All right, doctor,” says the king, kinder mocking him, “we’ll try and get ’em to send for you”—which made them all laugh, and they said it was a prime good hit.

Chapter 25

Binne twee minute was die tyding deur die hele dorp versprei en van alle kante af kon jy mense aangehardloop sien kom, party van hulle nog besig om hulle baadjies aan te trek. In 'n ommesientjie was daar 'n hele skare om ons, en die geluid van die voetstappe was kompleet soos dié van 'n klomp soldate aan 't marsjeer. Al die vensters en deure was dik van die mense, en kort- kort hoor jy iemand oor 'n heining vra: „Is dit hulle?”

Een van dié wat met die skare saamdraf sal dan antwoord gee: „Dis hulle, ja—sowaar.”

Toe ons by die huis aankom, is die hele straat aan die voorkant gelykvol mense en die drie dogters staan op die drumpel. Mary-Jane wás 'n rooikop, maar dit het nie saak gemaak nie: sy was vreeslik mooi en daar was lig in haar oë en haar gesig asof sy in die hemel is, so bly is sy dat haar ooms opgedaag het. Die koning gooi sy arms oop en Mary-Jane bestorm hom, en die haaslip bestorm die hertog, en toe *gewaar* hulle dit. Amper almal—die vroumense, in elk geval—staan en huil van blydschap oor die herontmoeting wat met soveel vroege plaasvind.

Toe gee die koning die hertog stilletjies 'n pomp met die elmboog —ek het dit gesien—en hy draai om na die doodkis wat daar in die hoek op twee stoele staan; en stadig en plegtig begin hy en die hertog soontoe stap, elk met 'n arm oor sy maat se skouer en die ander hand vasgedruk teen sy oe. Die mense val terug om vir hulle plek te maak en al die praterie en lawaai hou dadelik op, jy hoor net orals „Sjuut!” en die mans haal hul hoede af en buig hulle koppe; jy kan behoorlik 'n speld hoor val. En toe hulle by die doodkis aankom, buig hulle vooroor en gee een lang kyk—en toe bars hulle in 'n huilbui uit dat mens hulle amper in Orleans kan hoor; hulle slaan hulle arms om mekaar se nekke en stut hulle kenne op mekaar se skouers; en vir die volgende drie, vier minute grens hulle soos ek nog nooit in my lewensdag twee mansmense sien lek het nie. Die hele wêreld het naderhand begin klam voel. Eindelik gaan staan een van hulle dus- kant van die kis en die ander een anderkant, en hulle kniel en laat hulle voorkoppe op die kis rus, en begin by hulselwers te bid. Nouja, toe dit gebeur, toe vat dit darem aan die skare se harte en die leste een begin kliphard snik, die arme meisiekinders ook; en een vir een kom die vroumense na die meisiekinders toe, en sonder om 'n woord te sê gee elkeen hulle 'n plegtige soen op die voorkop, en druk 'n hand teen haar kop vas en kyk op hemel toe terwyl die trane oor haar wange rol; en dan bars sy behoorlik uit en begin grens en slobber en snik, en staan opsy sodat die volgende vroumens 'n beurt kan kry. Sowat van stuitlikheid het ek nog nooit gesien nie.

Nou ja, na 'n ruk staan die koning weer op en gee 'n paar tree vorentoe en

hy sweep homself goed op en begin 'n toespraak uit te slobber, die ene trane en soetsappige twak oor watse beproewing dit vir hom en sy arme broer is om die oorledene te verloor, en om nie die oorledene meer in lewe te sien nie, en dit na die lang reis van vierduisend myl, maar dat die beproewing versag en gelouter is deur dié gewaardeerde medelye en dié heilige trane, en dat hy hulle daarom uit die diepte van sy hart en uit die diepte van sy broer se hart bedank, want met hulle monde kan hulle dit nie doen nie, omdat woorde te swak en te koud is, en nog 'n hele spul sulke kaf en floeferigheid tot mens behoorlik kon maagpyn kry daarvan; en eindelijk druil en stotter hy 'n vrome, blobberige Amen uit, en gee dan heeltemal skiet en begin grens dat hy bars.

En sy woorde is nog nie koud nie, toe sit iemand in die skare 'n psalm in en al wat leef sing dat dit dreun; dit het mens sommer weer beter laat voel—net so lekker soos wat jy voel as die kerk uit- kom. Musiek is nou eenmaal 'n goeie ding, en ná al daardie gekerm en gesanik het dit die hele spul weer lekker opgevrolik; dit was nou rêrig sommer 'n rondborstige, bak soort singery.

Toe begin die koning se kakebene weer te wikkkel en hy sê hy en sy niggies sal tog te bly wees as 'n paar van die vernaamste belangrikste vriende van die gesin dié aand saam met hulle sal eet en hulle help waak by die as van die oorledene; as sy broer wat nou daar in die hoek lê, kon praat, dan weet hy maar te goed watter name hy sou noem, want dié name was vir horn alte dierbaar en hy het dikwels in sy briewe van hulle geskrywe; hy sal hulle dus een vir een uitroep, te wete naamlik die volgende, dit wil sê: dominee Hobson, en dia- ken Lot Hovey, en mnr. Ben Rucker, en Abner Shackelford, en Levi Bell, en dr. Robinson, en hulle vrouens, en weduwee Bartley.

Dominee Hobson en dr. Robinson was aan die oorkant van die dorp aan't jag; ek bedoel die dokter was besig om 'n siek man oor te help na die ander wêreld en die dominee was besig om hom reg te sien. Prokureur Bell was vort na Louisville toe vir besigheid. Maar die ander was almal daar en hulle het almal nader gestaan en die koning bladgesteek en hom bedank en met hom gesels; en hulle het die hertog ook bladgesteek, maar niks gesê nie, net die heeltyd ge- glimlag en hulle koppe aanmekaar bly knik soos 'n spul malles, terwyl hý gebare maak met sy hande en een stryk deur bly sê „Goe- goe—goe-goe-goe,” soos 'n baba wat nie kan praat nie.

Die koning babbel maar voort en verneem na elke liewe siel en elke hond in die dorp—noem elkeen by die naam en praat oor allerhande kleinigheidjies wat op die een of ander tyd daar in die dorp, of met George se familie of met Peter gebeur het. Elke slag gee hy te kenne dat Peter hom daarvan geskryf het, maar dit was natuur- lik 'n lieg: hy't elke vervlakste ding uit daardie pampoenkop getrek wat ons in die kano na die stoomboot toe geroei het.

Toe gaan haal Mary-Jane die brief wat haar pa nagelaat het en die koning lees dit hardop en begin weer 'n slag grens. In die brief word die woonhuis en drieduisend goue dollars aan die dogters bemaak; en die leerlooïery (wat floreer), 'n paar ander huise en stukke grond (altesame omtrent seweduisend

werd), en drieduisend goue dollars aan Harvey en William. Dit sê ook waar die sesduisend dollar kon- tant weggesteek is—onder in die kelder. Nou ja, die twee skurke sê toe hulle sal dit gaan haal en alles eerlik en regverdig verdeel. Ek moet 'n kers gaan haal en saam met hulle kom.

Ons het die kelderdeur agter ons toegemaak, en toe hulle die sak kry, het hulle dit eers op die vloer omgekeer. Dit was darem vir jou iets om te sien, al daardie goudstukke! En het die koning se oë geblink!

Hy slaat die hertog agter sy blaai en sê: „Dis darem vir jou *piekniek* dié, jong! Jissem! Hemel, Bilgie, dis mos sommer stukke beter as die Weergalose Majesteit, of hoe?”

Die hertog stem saam. Hulle speel met die geldstukke en laat die goed tussen hulle vingers deur glip en op die vloer rinkel.

Toe sê die koning: „Dit help nie om te stry nie, Bilge. Om broers van 'n ryk, dooie man te wees en oorsese erfgename te kom verteen- woordig—dis die werk vir my en jou. Dit kom van vertrou op die Voorsienigheid. Dis altyd die beste op die duur. Ek het al alles probeer, maar daar's g'n beter manier nie.”

Enigiemand anders sou doodtevrede gewees het met die hoop geld en dit te goedertrou so geneem het, maar nee: hulle moet dit kwan- suis eers tel. En hulle tel die geld—en daar makeer vierhonderd-en- vyftien dollar.

„Vervlaks,” sê die koning. „Ek wonder wat hy met dié vier- honderd-en- vyftien dollar aangevang het?”

Hulle probeer die saak 'n rukkie bekommerd uitpluis en keer die hele kelder om op soek daarna.

Dan sê die hertog: „Hy was baie siek hier teen die end: hy't seker maar 'n fout gemaak. Ek dink dis wat gebeur het. Die beste is om dit maar so te laat deurgaen en ons monde te hou. Ons kan daarsonder klaarkom.”

„Natuurlik, ja, ons kan daarsonder *klaarkom*. Ek is nie dáároor bekommerd nie. Dis aan die *tellery* dat ek dink. Want dis 'n saak waar ons vreeslik eerlik en opreg moet wees, verstaan? Niemand mag lont ruik nie. Ons moet die geld hier opdra boontoe en dit daar vóór almal gaan tel—dan is dit bo verdenking. Maar as die dooie man nou sê daar's sesduisend dollars, dan wil mens nie graag . . . jy weet. . .”

„Wag 'n bietjie,” sê die hertog. „Kom ons vul daardie tekort aan.” En hy begin goudstukke uit sy sak haal.

„Dis nou sommer 'n blink gedagte, hertog,” sê die koning. „Jou kop is reg aangeskroewe. Die lieue ou Weergalose Majesteit help ons sowaar al wéér!” Toe begin hy ook goudstukke uithaal en op- stawel.

Dit het hulle ampertjies bankrot gemaak, maar hulle het die ses- duisend vol gekry.

„Haai, luister,” sê die hertog. „Ek het nóg 'n plan. Kom ons gaan tel die geld daarbo—*en dan gee ons dit vir die dogters.*”

„Goeiste, hertog, kom hier dat ek jou omhels. Dis nou die blinkste gedagte wat enigiemand nóg gekry het. Jou gelyke het ek nog nooit teëgekom

nie. Dit sal die seël daarop sit. As daar enigiemand is wat nog agterdogtig voel, sal dit hom oortuig.”

Ons is terug boontoe, waar almal om die tafel saamgedrom het. Daar het die koning die geld getel en dit in staweltjies gepak, drie- honderd dollar in elke staweltjie—tuintig altesame. Almal staan dit en aangaap en watertand. Toe gooi hulle dit weer alles in die sak en die koning begin hom opblaas vir ’n nuwe toespraak.

„Vriende,” sê hy. „My arme broer daar in die hoek het met ruim hart gesorg vir dié wat hy in die tranedal agtergelaat het. Hy’t goed gesorg vir dié arme lammertjies wat hy liefgehad en gehuisves het en wat nou sonder vader of moeder agterbly. En ons wat hom geken het, weet hy sou nog meer vir hulle gedoen het as hy nie bang was om sy geliefde William en myself seer te maak nie. Dink julle nie so nie? Ek betwyfel dit vir geen oomblik nie. Nou kyk: watse broers sal ons wees as ons op ’n tyd soos dié in sy weg sal staan? En watse soort ooms sal ons wees as ons sulke liewe lammertjies soos dié, wat hy só liefgehad het, op ’n tyd soos did sal besteel—*besteel*, ja! As ek William ken—en ek dink ek ken hom—wel, vra hom self.” Hy draai om en begin ’n klomp verspotte gebare met sy hande in die hertog se rigting maak. ’n Ruk lank kyk die hertog hom half onnosel en toeërig aan, en toe lyk dit of hy skielik snap wat aangaan en hy bestorm die koning en goe-goe vir die vales van blydskap en druk hom omtrent vyftien keer na mekaar teen sy bors vas voor hy bedaar. Toe sê die koning: „Ek het dit geweet. En ek dink julle is nou almal oortuig van sy gevoelens oor die saak. Kom hier, Mary-Jane, Susan, Joanna: vat vir julle die geld. Vat *alles*. Dit kom van hom wat daar in die hoek lê, koud maar verheug.”

Mary-Jane bestorm hom en Susan en die haaslip bestorm die hertog, en dit gee weer van vóór af aan ’n soenery en ’n omhelsery af. En almal drom saam met trane in die oë en skud die skurke se hande amper van hul lywe af, en sê aanmekaar:

„Julle *liewe* mense! Hoe *wonderlik!* Hoe *kan* julle?”

Net daarna begin die hele klomp weer oor die oorledene te praat: oor hoe goed hy was en oor wat ’n verlies dit is en so aan. ’n Groot man met ’n breë kakebeen begin van buite af sy pad inwurm en hy staan die hele gedoente só en beskou en beluister, maar hy sê niks; en niemand praat met hóm nie, want die koning was aan die woord en almal luister na hom.

Hy’s net besig om te sê: „... omdat hulle sulke goeie vriende van die oorledene was. Dis hoekom hulle uitgenooi is vir vanaand. Maar more wil ons *almal* hier hê—álmal, want hy’t van almal gehou en respek gehad vir almal, dus is dit niks minder as reg dat sy begrafnis- orgieë in die openbaar sal plaasvind nie.” En so hou hy maar aan, want hy hou van sy eie stem; en elke kort-kort praat hy maar van die orgieë by die begrafnis—tot die hertog dit net nie meer kan hou nie. Op ’n klein stukkie papier skryf hy: *Jy bedoel „orasies”, jou ou swaap*. Hy vou dit op en kom goe-goe nader en gee dit oor die mense se koppe vir hom aan. Die koning lees dit, steek dit in sy sak, en sê:

„Arme William, hy't dit maar swaar, maar sy *hart* is reg. Hy vra my nou net om julle álmal uit te nooi na die begrafnis toe. Maar hy was vemiet bekommerd. Dis net wat ek besig was om te doen.” En toe gaan hy maar weer doordrustig voort, en hy hou maar aan om kort-kort, nes tevore, van die orgieë te praat. Toe hy dit die derde keer herhaal, sê hy:

„Ek sê, orgieë’, nie omdat dit die bekendste woord daarvoor is nie. Want dit is nie. Die bekendste woord is ‚orasies’. Maar dis die korrekste woord. In Engeland praat ons nie meer van ‚orasies’ nie, net van ‚orgieë’. ‚Orgieë’ is beter, want dit sê baie mooier wat jy bedoel. Die woord kom van die Grieks *orgo*—buitekant, oop’—en die Hebreeus *giesum*—om te plant, of te bedek’. Dus: om te begrawe. Julie sien dus dat ‚begrafnisorgieë’ beteken ’n ‚openbare begrafnis’.” Kyk, sowat het ek darem nog nie gehoor nie. En die man met die breë kakebeen lag sommer reguit in sy gesig. Almal was morsdood geskok daaroor. „Maar *dokter!*” hoor jy net orals. En Abner Shackelford sê: „Robinson, het jy dan nie die tyding gekry nie? Dit is Harvey Wilks.”

Die koning glimlag oorgretig en steek sy hand uit en vra: „Is *dit* my arme broer se liewe, goeie vriend en geneesheer? Ek . . .”

„Vat jou hande weg van my af!” sê die dokter. „Dink jy miskien jy praat soos ’n Engelsman? Dis die slegste probeerslag wat ek nog gehoor het. Peter Wilks se broer—jy? Jy’s ’n skurk, dís wat jy is!”

Hemel, tóe moes jy hulle hoor. Hulle pak daar om die dokter saam en probeer hom tot bedaring bring, en probeer die saak aan hom verduidelik, en vertel hom dat Harvey op ’n menigte maniere *bewys* het dat hy Harvey is en dat hy almal op die naam gegroet en seifs die honde se name geken het. En hulle smee hom—*soebat* hom—om tog nie arme Harvey se gevoelens seer te maak en die arme dogters te kwets nie, ensovoorts; maar dit help niks. Hy hou aan met raas en sê dat enigiemand wat hom uitgee vir ’n Engelsman en dan só praat, niks anders as ’n leuenaar en ’n skurk is nie. Die arme meisiekinders klou huilend aan die koning vas. En skielik swaai die dokter om na hulle toe:

„Ek was julle pa se vriend, en ek is julle vriend. En ek waarsku julle as ’n vriend—en ’n eerbare een daarby—wat julle uit moeilikheid en skade wil hou, om dié skurk die rug toe te draai en niks met hom te doene te hê nie. Dié onnosele boemelaar met sy verspotte Grieks en Hebreeus soos hý dit noem! Mens kan met ’n stok aanvoel dat hy lieg. Hy kom hier aan met ’n spul leë name en feite wat hy iewers opgetel het en julle sluk dit asof dit *bewyse* is—en julle onnosele vriende hier, wat van beter behoort te weet, help julle nog van die wal in die sloot. Mary-Jane Wilks, jy weet ek is jou vriend, jou onselfsugtige vriend. Luister nou na my: jaag hierdie misrawele ou vabond hier uit. Ek *smeek* jou. Sal jy?”

Mary-Jane gaan penregop staan, te mooi vir woorde. En sy sê: „*Dit* is my antwoord.” Sy tel die geldsak op en sit dit in die koning se hande en sê vir hom: „Neem die sesduisend dollar en gaan belê dit vir my en my susters. Jy hoef my nie eens ’n kwitansie daarvoor te gee nie.”

Sy gaan langs die koning staan en slaan haar arm om sy lyf; en Susan en

die haaslip gaan aan sy ander kant staan en maak ook so. Almal begin hande klap en voete stamp totdat dit na 'n behoor- like donderstorm klink, terwyl die koning met sy kop hoog in die lug staan, met 'n trotse glimlag op sy mond.

„Nou goed,” sê die dokter. „Ek was my hande in onskuld. Maar ek waarsku julle almal: daar gaan nog 'n dag kom dat julle gaan mislik voel as julle net *dink* aan vandag.” En toe loop hy.

„Goed dokter,” sê die koning half spottend. „Ons sal vir hulle sê om jou te roep as hulle sleg voel.” Dit het hulle almal laat uitbars van die lag, want die grap was vir hulle alte gevat.

SECTION 26

Well when they was all gone, the king he asks Mary Jane how they was off for spare rooms, and she said she had one spare room, which would do for Uncle William, and she'd give her own room to Uncle Harvey, which was a little bigger, and she would turn into the room with her sisters and sleep on a cot; and up garret was a little cubby, with a pallet in it. The king said the cubby would do for his valley—meaning me.

So Mary Jane took us up, and she showed them their rooms, which was plain but nice. She said she'd have her frocks and a lot of other traps took out of her room if they was in Uncle Harvey's way, but he said they warn't. The frocks was hung along the wall, and before them was a curtain made out of calico that hung down to the floor. There was an old hair trunk in one corner, and a guitar box in another, and all sorts of little knick-knacks and jimcracks around, like girls brisken up a room with. The king said it was all the more homely and more pleasanter for these fixings, and so don't disturb them. The duke's room was pretty small, but plenty good enough, and so was my cubby.

That night they had a big supper, and all them men and women was there, and I stood behind the king and the duke's chairs and waited on them, and the niggers waited on the rest. Mary Jane she set at the head of the table, with Susan along side of her, and said how bad the biscuits was, and how mean the preserves was, and how ornery and tough the fried chickens was

—and all that kind of rot, the way women always do for to force out compliments; and the people all knowed everything was tip-top, and said so—said “How *do* you get biscuits to brown so nice?” and “Where, for the land’s sake, *did* you get these amaz’n pickles?” and all that kind of humbug talky-talk, just the way people always does at a supper, you know.

And when it was all done, me and the hare-lip had supper in the kitchen off of the leavings, whilst the others was helping the niggers clean up the things. The hare-lip she got to pumping me about England, and blest if I didn’t think the ice was getting mighty thin, sometimes. She says:

“Did you ever see the king?”

“Who? William Fourth? Well, I bet I have—he goes to our church.” I knowed he was dead years ago^{e1}, but I never let on. So when I says he goes to our church, she says:

“What—regular?”

“Yes—regular. His pew’s right over opposite ourn—on ’tother side the pulpit.”

“I thought he lived in London?”

“Well, he does. Where *would* he live?”

“But I thought *you* lived in Sheffield^{e2}?”

I see I was up a stump. I had to let on to get choked with a chicken bone, so as to get time to think how to get down again. Then I says:

“I mean he goes to our church regular when he’s in Sheffield. That’s only in the summer-time, when he comes there to take the sea baths.”

“Why, how you talk—Sheffield ain’t on the sea.”

“Well, who said it was?”

“Why, you did.”

“I *didn’t*, nuther.”

“You did!”

“I didn’t.”

“You did.”

“I never said nothing of the kind.”

“Well, what *did* you say, then?”

“Said he come to take the sea *baths*—that’s what I said.”

“Well, then! how’s he going to take the sea baths if it ain’t on the sea?”

“Looky here,” I says; “did you ever see any Congress water^{e3}?”

“Yes.”

“Well, did you have to go to Congress to get it?”

“Why, no.”

“Well, neither does William Fourth have to go to the sea to get a sea bath.”

“How does he get it, then?”

“Gets it the way people down here gets Congress-water—in barrels. There in the palace at Sheffield they’ve got furnaces, and he wants his water hot. They can’t bile that amount of water away off there at the sea. They haven’t got no conveniences for it.”

“Oh, I see, now. You might a said that in the first place and saved time.”

When she said that, I see I was out of the woods again, and so I was comfortable and glad. Next, she says:

“Do you go to church, too?”

“Yes—regular.”

“Where do you set?”

“Why, in our pew.”

“*Whose* pew?”

“Why, *ourn*—your Uncle Harvey’s.”

“His’n? What does *he* want with a pew?”

“Wants it to set in. What did you *reckon* he wanted with it?”

“Why, I thought he’d be in the pulpit.”

Rot him, I forgot he was a preacher. I see I was up a stump again, so I played another chicken bone and got another think. Then I says:

“Blame it, do you suppose there ain’t but one preacher to a church?”

“Why, what do they want with more?”

“What!—to preach before a king? I never see such a girl as you. They don’t have no less than seventeen.”

“Seventeen! My land! Why, I wouldn’t set out such a string as that, not if I *never* got to glory. It must take ’em a week.”

“Shucks, they don’t *all* of ’em preach the same day—only *one* of ’em.”

“Well, then, what does the rest of ’em do?”

“Oh, nothing much. Loll around, pass the plate—and one thing or another. But mainly they don’t do nothing.”

“Well, then, what are they *for*?”

“Why, they’re for *style*. Don’t you know nothing?”

“Well, I don’t *want* to know no such foolishness as that. How is servants treated in England? Do they treat ’em better ’n we treat our niggers?”

“*No!* A servant ain’t nobody there. They treat them worse than dogs.”

“Don’t they give ’em holidays, the way we do, Christmas and New Year’s week, and Fourth of July?”

“Oh, just listen! A body could tell *you* hain’t ever been to England, by that. Why, Hare-I—why, Joanna, they never see a holiday from year’s end to year’s end; never go to the circus, nor theatre, nor nigger shows,

nor nowheres.”

“Nor church?”

“Nor church.”

“But *you* always went to church.”

Well, I was gone up again. I forgot I was the old man's servant. But next minute I whirled in on a kind of an explanation how a valley was different from a common servant, and *had* to go to church whether he wanted to or not, and set with the family, on account of it's being the law. But I didn't do it pretty good, and when I got done I see she warn't satisfied. She says:

“Honest injun, now, hain't you been telling me a lot of lies?”

“Honest injun,” says I.

“None of it at all?”

“None of it at all. Not a lie in it,” says I.

“Lay your hand on this book and say it.”

I see it warn't nothing but a dictionary, so I laid my hand on it²⁵ and said it. So then she looked a little better satisfied, and says:

“Well, then, I'll believe some of it; but I hope to gracious if I'll believe the rest.”

“What is it you won't believe, Joe?” says Mary Jane, stepping in with Susan behind her. “It ain't right nor kind for you to talk so to him, and him a stranger and so far from his people. How would you like to be

treated so?”

“That’s always your way, Maim—always sailing in to help somebody before they’re hurt. I hain’t done nothing to him. He’s told some stretchers, I reckon; and I said I wouldn’t swallow it all; and that’s every bit and grain I *did* say. I reckon he can stand a little thing like that, can’t he?”

“I don’t care whether ’twas little or whether ’twas big, he’s here in our house and a stranger, and it wasn’t good of you to say it. If you was in his place, it would make you feel ashamed; and so you oughtn’t to say a thing to another person that will make *them* feel ashamed.”

“Why, Maim, he said——”

“It don’t make no difference what he *said*—that ain’t the thing. The thing is for you to treat him *kind*, and not be saying things to make him remember he ain’t in his own country and amongst his own folks.”

I says to myself, *this* is a girl that I’m letting that old reptle rob her of her money!

Then Susan *she* waltzed in; and if you’ll believe me, she did give Hare-lip hark from the tomb!²⁶

Says I to myself, And this is *another* one that I’m letting him rob her of her money!

Then Mary Jane she took another inning, and went in sweet and lovely again—which was her way—but when she got done there warn’t hardly anything left o’ poor Hare-lip. So she hollered.

“All right, then,” says the other girls, “you just ask his pardon.”

She done it, too. And she done it beautiful. She done it so beautiful it was good to hear; and I wished I could tell her a thousand lies, so she could do it again.

I says to myself, this is *another* one that I’m letting him rob her of her money. And when she got through, they all jest laid theirselves out to make me feel at home and know I was amongst friends. I felt so ornery and low down and mean, that I says to myself, My mind’s made up; I’ll hive that money for them or bust.

So then I lit out—for bed, I said, meaning some time or another. When I got by myself, I went to thinking the thing over. I says to myself, shall I go to that doctor, private, and blow on these frauds? No—that won’t do. He might tell who told him; then the king and the duke would make it warm for me. Shall I go, private, and tell Mary Jane? No—I dasn’t do it. Her face would give them a hint, sure; they’ve got the money, and they’d slide right out and get away with it. If she was to fetch in help, I’d get mixed up in the business, before it was done with, I judge. No, there ain’t no good way but one. I got to steal that money, somehow; and I got to steal it some way that they won’t suspicion that I done it. They’ve got a good thing, here; and they ain’t agoing to leave till they’ve played this family and this town for all they’re worth, so I’ll find a chance time enough. I’ll steal it, and hide it; and by-and-by, when I’m away down the river, I’ll write a letter and tell Mary Jane where it’s hid. But I better hive it to-night, if I can, because the doctor maybe hasn’t let up as much as he lets on he has; he might scare them out of here, yet.

So, thinks I, I'll go and search them rooms. Up stairs the hall was dark, but I found the duke's room, and started to paw around it with my hands; but I recollected it wouldn't be much like the king to let anybody else take care of that money but his own self; so then I went to his room and begun to paw around there. But I see I couldn't do nothing without a candle, and I dasn't light one, of course. So I judged I'd got to do the other thing—lay for them, and eavesdrop. About that time, I hears their footsteps coming, and was going to skip under the bed; I reached for it, but it wasn't where I thought it would be; but I touched the curtain that hid Mary Jane's frocks, so I jumped in behind that and snuggled in amongst the gowns, and stood there perfectly still.

They come in and shut the door; and the first thing the duke done was to get down and look under the bed. Then I was glad I hadn't found the bed when I wanted it. And yet, you know, it's kind of natural to hide under the bed when you are up to anything private. They sets down, then, and the king says:

"Well, what is it? and cut it middlin' short, because it's better for us to be down there a whoopin'-up the mournin', than up here givin' 'em a chance to talk us over."

"Well, this is it, Capet. I ain't easy; I ain't comfortable. That doctor lays on my mind. I wanted to know your plans. I've got a notion, and I think it's a sound one."

"What is it, duke?"

"That we better glide out of this, before three in the morning, and clip it down the river with what we've got.

Specially, seeing we got it so easy—*given* back to us, flung at our heads, as you may say, when of course we allowed to have to steal it back. I'm for knocking off and lighting out."

That made me feel pretty bad. About an hour or two ago, it would a been a little different, but now it made me feel bad and disappointed. The king rips out and says:

"What! And not sell out the rest o' the property? March off like a passel o' fools and leave eight or nine thous'n' dollars' worth o' property layin' around jest sufferin' to be scooped in?—and all good salable stuff, too."

The duke he grumbled; said the bag of gold was enough, and he didn't want to go no deeper—didn't want to rob a lot of orphans of *everything* they had.

"Why, how you talk!" says the king. "We shan't rob 'em of nothing at all but jest this money. The people that *buys* the property is the suff'rers; because as soon's it's found out 'at we didn't own it—which won't be long after we've slid—the sale won't be valid, and it'll all go back to the estate. These yer orphans 'll git their house back agin, and that's enough for *them*; they're young and spry, and k'n easy earn a livin'^{e4}. *They* ain't agoing to suffer. Why, jest think—there's thous'n's and thous'n's that ain't nigh so well off. Bless you, *they* ain't got noth'n to complain of."

Well, the king he talked him blind; so at last he give in, and said all right, but said he believed it was blame foolishness to stay, and that doctor hanging over them. But the king says:

“Cuss the doctor! What do we k’yer for *him*? Hain’t we got all the fools in town on our side? and ain’t that a big enough majority in any town?^{e5}”

So they got ready to go down stairs again. The duke says:

“I don’t think we put that money in a good place.”

That cheered me up. I’d begun to think I warn’t going to get a hint of no kind to help me. The king says:

“Why?”

“Because Mary Jane ’ll be in mourning from this out; and first you know the nigger that does up the rooms will get an order to box these duds up and put ’em away; and do you reckon a nigger can run across money and not borrow some of it?”

“Your head’s level, agin, duke,” says the king; and he come a fumbling under the curtain two or three foot from where I was. I stuck tight to the wall, and kept mighty still, though quivery; and I wondered what them fellows would say to me if they caught me; and I tried to think what I’d better do if they did catch me. But the king he got the bag before I could think more than about a half a thought, and he never suspicioned I was around. They took and shoved the bag through a rip in the straw tick that was under the feather bed, and crammed it in a foot or two amongst the straw and said it was all right, now, because a nigger only makes up the feather bed, and don’t turn over the straw tick only about twice a year, and so it warn’t in no danger of getting stole, now.

But I knowed better. I had it out of there before they was half-way down stairs. I groped along up to my cubby, and hid it there till I could get a chance to do better. I judged I better hide it outside of the house somewheres, because if they missed it they would give the house a good ransacking. I knowed that very well. Then I turned in, with my clothes all on; but I couldn't a gone to sleep, if I'd a wanted to, I was in such a sweat to get through with the business. By-and-by I heard the king and the duke come up; so I rolled off of my pallet and laid with my chin at the top of my ladder and waited to see if anything was going to happen. But nothing did.

So I held on till all the late sounds had quit and the early ones hadn't begun, yet; and then I slipped down the ladder.

Chapter 26

Toe die mense eindelijk weg is, vra die koning vir

Mary-Jane hoe sake met vrykamers gesteld is, en sy antwoord dat daar een kamer vir oom William is en dat sy haar eie kamer—wat darem bietjie groter is—vir oom Harvey sal afgee, dan kan sy saam met haar susters op 'n traliekateltjie gaan slaap. Op die solder is daar 'n slaapplekkie met 'n strooimatrass. Dié plekkie sal deug vir sy „vallei”, sê die koning (dis nou glo *ek*).

Daarna het Mary-Jane ons boontoe geneem om ons die kamers te wys—doodgewoon, maar lekker. Sy't gesê sy sou 'n klomp rokke en goed daaruit wegneem as dit dalk in oom Harvey se pad is, maar hy wou nie daarvan hoor nie. Die rokke het teen die muur gehang, agter 'n katoengordyn wat tot op die vloer gehang het. In die een hoek was daar 'n groot koffer, in 'n ander hoek 'n ghitaarkas, en verder aller- hande fieterjassies en goetertjies wat 'n meisiemens gebruik om haar kamer mee te versier. Die koning het gesê dié goed laat die kamer des te vriendeliker en huisliker lyk, dus kan sy alles maar net so laat bly. Die hertog se kamer was maar taamlik klein, maar heeltemal

goed genoeg, en my hoekie ook.

Dié aand was daar 'n groot ete en al daardie mans en vrouens was ook daar. Ek het agter die koning en die hertog se stoele gestaan en hulle bedien, en die slawe het vir die ander gaste gesorg. Mary-Jane het aan die tafel se koppenent gesit, met Susan langs haar, en sy't heeltyd bly sê hoe sleg die koekies is en hoe hopeloos die konfyt is en hoe smaakloos en taai die braaihoenders was—al die soort twak waarmee vroumense gewoonlik vorendag kom as hulle komplimente wil hê; maar die gaste het almal gewéét die kos is sommer vorentoe, en so gesê ook. Hulle't gevra: „Hoe op aarde kry jy tog die koekies so mooi bruin ?” Of: „Goeiste, Mary-Jane, waar kom dié wonderlike piekels vandaan?” En al die lawwe ou kletspraatjies wat mens gewoonlik by 'n ete hoor.

Daarná het ek en die haaslip die oorskiet in die kombuis geëet terwyl die ander susters die slawe help om af te dek. Die haaslip het my die heeltyd oor Engeland bly uitvra en partykeer het ek amper gevoel my turf begin nou sit.

Sy wou weet: „Het jy ooit die koning gesien?”

„Wie? Willem die Vierde? Natuurlik. Hy kom altyd na ons kerk toe.” Ek het natuurlik geweet hy was lankal dood, maar ek het haar niks laat agterkom nie.

Toe sy nou hoor hy kom na ons kerk toe, vra sy: „Wat—gereeld?” „Ja, gereeld. Sy bank is reg oorkant ons s'n, aan die ander kant van die preekstoel.”

„Maar ek het dan gedink hy woon in Londen?”

„Natuurlik. Waar anders?”

„Maar woon julle dan nie in Sheffield nie?”

Nou was ek in 'n hoek vasgekeer. Ek maak toe maar of ek verstik aan 'n hoenderbeentjie sodat ek aan iets kan dink om daar verby te kom. Eindelik antwoord ek: „Ek bedoel hy kom gereeld na ons kerk toe wanneer hy in Sheffield is. Dis net in die somer, as hy soontoe kom om seebaddens te neem.”

„Wat praat jy tog alles? Sheffield lê mos nie by die see nie!”

„Nou ja, wie't gesê dis by die see?”

„Jy het.”

„Ek hét nie.”

„Jy het.”

„Ek het nie.”

„Jy het.”

„Ek het nooit so iets gesê nie.”

„Nou wat hét jy dan miskien gesê?”

„Ek het gesê hy kom *seebaddens* neem—dís wat ek gesê het.”

„Nou hoe kan hy seebaddens daar neem as die dorp nie by die see lê nie?”

„Kyk,” sê ek. „Het jy al ooit van Congress-water gehoor?”

„Ja.”

„Nou moet jy miskien na Congress toe gaan om dit te kry ?” „Nee.”

„Nou ja, dan hoef Willem die Vierde ook mos nie see toe te gaan om

seebaddens te neem nie.”

„Maar waar kry hy dan die water ?”

„Op dieselfde manier as wat ons Congress-water kry—in vaatjies. Daar’s groot oonde in die paleis in Sheffield, want hy hou van sy water warm. By die see kan hulle nie so ’n klomp water gelyk kook nie. Daar’s nie geriewe daarvoor nie.”

„0, nou verstaan ek. Hoekom het jy nie heel aan die begin so gesê nie?”

Toe sy dít sê, is ek weer uit die hoek uit en ek voel net hoogs in my skik en opgewek. Toe wil sy weer weet:

„Gaan jy ook kerk toe?”

„Ja, gereeld.”

„Waar sit jy?”

„In ons bank, natuurlik.”

„Wie se bank?”

„Ons s’n—oom Harvey s’n.”

„Sýne? Hoekom wil hy ’n kerkbank hê?”

„Om in te sit. Waarvoor anders miskien ?”

„Ek het gedog hy’s op die preekstoel.”

Verduiwels, ek het skoon vergeet hy was ’n predikant! Ek beseft dat sy my weer in ’n hoek het, en verstik toe maar nog ’n slag aan ’n hoenderbeentjie om dinkans te kry.

Toe sê ek: „Gits, dink jy dan miskien daar’s net een dominee in ’n kerk?”

„Hoekom is daar meer as een nodig?”

„Wat ? Om voor ’n koning te preek ? Nee sowaar, ek het nog nooit so ’n dom meisiemens gesien nie. Daar’s *sewentien* van hulle in ons kerk.” „Sewentien? Jissem! Ek sal nog so nooit stilsit en na só ’n rits preke op ’n slag luister nie. Selfs al beteken dit dat ek nooit in die hemel kom nie. Dit duur seker ’n volle week!”

„Domkop, hulle preek mos nie almal op een dag nie. Net een elke Sondag.”

„Maar wat doen die ander klomp dan?”

„O, nie juis veel nie. Slenter so bietjie rond, gee die kollektebordjies aan en so. Maar gewoonlik doen hulle niks.”

„Nou hoekom is hulle dan daar?”

„Sommer vir die mooi, man. Weet jy dan niks ?”

„Wie wil nou sulke simpel goed weet? Sê my, hoe word bediendes in Engeland behandel? Beter as ons slawe hier?”

„Nee! ’n Bediende is sommer niks. Hy word erger as ’n hond behandel.”

„Kry hulle nie vakansiedae soos hier nie? Ek bedoel nou met Kersfees en Nuwejaar en die Vierde Julie?”

„Jinne, mens kan hoor jý was nog nooit in Engeland nie. Gits, ou Haasl... Joanna, hulle kry nooit ’n enkele vakansiedag nie, jaar-in en jaar-uit; hulle kom nooit in ’n sirkus of ’n teater of ’n negerop-voering of *iets* nie.”

„En kerk?”

„Kerk ook nie.”

„Maar jy't dan altyd kerk toe gegaan?”

Daar sit ek weer. Ek het skoon vergeet ek was die oubaas se bediende. Maar ek val sommer dadelik weg en vertel haar 'n „vallei” is heeltemal anders as 'n ordinêre bediende: hy *moet* kerk toe gaan of hy wil of nie en by die familie sit ook, want die wet sê so. Maar ek het nie waffer goed gevaar nie, en toe ek klaar is, kon ek sien sy's glad nie tevrede nie.

„Sê nou vir my, op jou woord is dit 'n spul leuens wat jy vir my vertel het?” vra sy.

„Op my woord,” sê ek.

„Nie een enkele leuen nie?”

„Nie een nie. Elke woord is waar.”

„Sit dan jou hand op hierdie boek neer en sê so.”

Ek kon sien dis sommer net 'n ou woordeboek, dus het ek my hand daarop gesit en gesweer. Nou het sy bietjie meer tevrede gelyk en gesê:

„Nou ja, dan sal ek 'n bietjie daarvan glo. Maar so wragtiewaar nie álles nie.”

„Wat wil jy nie glo nie, Joe?” vra Mary-Jane, wat net toe haar verskyning maak, gevolg deur Susan. „Dis mos nie mooi of reg van jou om sulke goed te sê vir 'n arme vreemdeling wat so ver van sy mense af is nie? Hoe sal jy daarvan hou om so behandel te word?”

„Jy maak altyd so, Maim—jy doen altyd voorspraak vir iemand voor hy seergemaak word. Ek het hom niks gedoen nie. Hy't die waarheid so bietjie gerek, dink ek, en toe't ek gesê ek gaan dit nie alles vir soetkoek opeet nie. Dis ál wat ek gesê het. So 'n kleinigheidjie kan hy tog seker sluk, of hoe?”

„Dit maak nie saak of dit klein of groot was nie. Hy's 'n vreemdeling hier in ons huis en dit was nie mooi van jou om dit te sê nie. Wat jy moet doen, is om hom vriendelik te behandel en nie vir hom goed te sê wat hom laat onthou dat hy weg is van sy eie land en sy mense nie.”

By myselfers dink ek: en *dis* nou die meisiekind wat ek deur daardie ou slang van haar geld laat beroof!

Toe kom Susan ook tussenbeide en sý gee darem vir Haaslip 'n skrobbering, hoor!

En ek dink by myselfers: en hier's *nog* een wat ek deur hom laat besteel!

Toe gooi Mary-Jane wêér 'n stuiwer in die armbeurs en daarna word sy weer net so lief en goed soos sy gewoonlik is; maar teen dié tyd was daar maar min oor van die arme ou Haaslip en sy begin grens.

„Nou goed dan maar,” sê die twee ander meisies. „Sê nou net vir hom jy's jammer.”

Sy maak soos hulle gesê het, en sy doen dit tog te pragtig—só pragtig dat dit heerlik was om na haar te luister; en ek het gewens ek kon haar 'n duisend leuens vertel net sodat sy dit weer kon doen.

By myselfers dink ek: en ek laat sowaar toe dat hy dié een ook besteel!

Toe sy klaar is, gaan hulle uit hulle pad uit om my te laat tuisvoel en my

te verseker dat ek tussen vriende is. Dit het my so oes en ge-meen en vrot laat voel, dat ek besluit: Een ding is nou wis en seker: buig of bars, ek gaan sorg dat hulle daardie geld hou.

Daarna maak ek dat ek daar uitkom—bed toe, sê ek, maar ek laat hulle nie agterkom dat ek van plan is om eers heelwat later regtig in te kruip nie. Toe ek nou weer 'n slag alleen is, begin ek die saak oor-dink. Moet ek stilletjies na daardie dokter toe gaan, wonder ek, en die twee skurke gaan verklap? Nee. Want sê nou hy gaan vertel vir hulle waar hy aan die inligting kom dan gaan daardie twee die wêreld vir my warm maak. Moet ek dan liever stilletjies na Mary-Jane toe gaan? Nee, dit kan ek ook nie. Haar gesig sal hulle te gou laat agter-kom wat gaande is, en dan lê hulle die geld vas en maak dat hulle wegkom. As sy gaan hulp soek, gaan ek ook vroeër of later in die saak betrokke raak. Nee, daar's net één uitweg: ek moet self op die een of ander manier die geld in die hande kry—en ek moet dit só doen dat hulle nooit agterkom wie die skuldige is nie. Hulle het 'n winsgewende saak hier beet en hulle sal beslis nie padgee voor hulle elke duit uit hierdie familie en hierdie dorp gesuig het wat hulle in die hande kan kry nie, dus het ek gelukkig heelwat tyd. Ek kan dit steel en dit wegsteek, en dan 'n ruk later van 'n hele ent verder teen die rivier af aan Mary-Jane skryf en haar vertel waar dit weggesteek is. Maar ek moet kyk of ek dit nie dalk vannag nog kan vaslê nie, want dalk is daardie dokter nog glad nie klaar met hulle nie; dalk jaag hy hulle nog só die skrik op die lyf dat hulle maak dat hulle wegkom.

Dus besluit ek om hulle kamers 'n bietjie te gaan deursoek. Die boonste verdieping was donker, maar ek het wel die hertog se kamer gekry en dit begin deursnuffel; maar toe val dit my by dat die koning nie die soort ou was wat enigiemand anders met die geld sou vertrou nie; dus is ek dadelik vort na sy kamer toe en ek begin daar te soek. Maar gou-gou besef ek dat ek nie ver sal kom sonder 'n kers nie, en ek durf natuurlik ook nie een aansteek nie. Dus besluit ek om maar die ander uitweg te volg: weg te kruip en hulle af te luister. Juis toe hoor ek hulle voetstappe aankom en ek mik na die bed se kant toe, maar ek kry dit nie waar ek dit verwag het nie; gelukkig raak ek aan die gordyn wat voor Mary-Jane se rokke hang, toe glip ek daar agter in, kruip tussen die rokke weg en bly doodstil staan.

Hulle kom binne en maak die deur toe. En die heel eerste ding wat die koning doen is om onder die bed in te loer. Toe voel ek darem vir jou bly dat ek nie die bed gekry het waar ek hom gesoek het nie, al is dit gewoonlik so 'n doodnatuurlike ding om onder 'n bed in te rol as jy wil wegkruip.

Hulle gaan sit en die koning vra: „Nou toe, wat makeer? En speel gou, want ek sê vir jou ons moet veel eerder daar onder gaan kerm en huil oor die begrafnis as om hier te kom sit en hulle kans te gee om ons te bespreek.”

„Kyk, die saak staan só, Capet. Ek voel glad nie op my gemak nie. Glad nie. Daardie dokter kriel in my gewete. Ek wou kom hoor wat jy van plan is om te doen. Ek het 'n plan—en ek dink dis 'n goeie een.”

„En wat is dit, hertog?”

„Dat ons voor drie-uur móreoggend hier wegkom en met die rivier langs laat spaander met wat ons het. Veral nou dat ons dit so maklik gekry het—in ons hande teruggegee; teen ons koppe gegooi kan jy amper sê, en dit terwyl ons gereken het ons sal dit moet gaan terugstéél. Ek stel voor ons maak spore.”

Dit was nou regtig vir my slegte nuus. ’n Paar uur gelde sou ek glad nie sleg gevoel het daaroor nie, maar nou was dit ’n ander storie.

Toe antwoord die koning omgekrap: „Wat? Sonder om die res van die eiendom te verkoop? Moet ons soos ’n spul swape hier pad- gee en agt- of negeduisend dollar se vaste eiendom net so laat lê omdat ons bang is ons word vasgetrap ? En dit nogal grond en goed wat mens sommer maklik van die hand sal sit!”

Die hertog sit en brom dat die sak goud genoeg is. Meer wil hy nie hê nie. Hy wil nie ’n klomp weeskinders gaan beroof van *alles* wat hulle het nie.

„Jy kan tog bog praat!” antwoord die koning. „Ons sal net die geld van hulle steel. Die mense wat die grond *koop*, sal die spit afbyt. Want sodra hulle uitvind dat dit nie ons grond was nie—en dit sal sommer gou ná ons vertrek wees—dan word die transaksie nietig verklaar en alles gaan terug in die boedel. Die wesies sal hulle huis terugkry—en dis tog oorgenoeg vir *hulle*. Hulle is nog jonk en sterk— hulle kan maklik ’n bestaan maak. *Hulle* gaan g’n ontbering ly nie. Dink net aan al die derduisende wat dit baie swaarder het. *Hulle* het niks om oor te kla nie, magtie!”

Die koning het hom skoon ’n gat in die kop gepraat sodat hy later maar ingegee het, en hy sê hulle kan dan maar so maak, al dink hy nog altyd dis malligheid om te bly terwyl die gevaar van die dokter oor hulle koppe hang.

Maar die koning antwoord: „Te duiwel met die dokter. Vir wat steur jy jou aan *hom*? Dink jy nie al die swape hier in die dorp staan aan ons kant nie —en is dit nie ’n groot genoeg meerderheid in enige dorp nie?”

Toe begin hulle aanstalties maak om weer ondertoe te gaan.

„Ek glo nie ons het daardie geld goed weggebêre nie,” sê die hertog skielik.

Dit het my laat moed skep, want ek het net begin dink ek gaan niks hoor wat my kan help nie.

„Hoekom?” vra die koning.

„Omdat Mary-Jane van nou af sal rouklere dra, en een van die dae gaan hulle vir die slaaf wat hier aan die kant maak sê hy moet al dié klere inpak en iewers loop bêre. En dink jy ’n neger wat geld raakloop, gaan hom nie self help nie ?”

„Nou werk jou kop weer reg, hertog,” sê die koning en hy kom vroetel hier onder die gordyn skaars twee, drie voet van waar ek staan. Ek druk my vas teen die muur en bly morsdoodstil so staan al het ek die bibberasie, en ek wonder wat hulle sal sê as hulle my daar vang; en ek begin solank dink aan wat ek moet doen as hulk my wél betrap. Maar nog voor ek meer as omtrent ’n halwe gedagte kon dink, het die koning al die sak gekry, en dit sonder om

enige lont te ruik. Hulle skuif toe die sak deur 'n skeur in die strooimatrass onder die bultak op die bed, en druk dit 'n voet of wat onder die strooi in. Nou's dit veilig, besluit hulle, want 'n slaaf maak mos net die bultak aan die kant, en draai die strooimatrass net omtrent twee keer per jaar om. Daar was dus geen gevaar dat die geld nou gesteel kon word nie.

Maar ék het van beter geweet. Nog voor hulle halfpad ondertoe was, het ek dit al daar uit gehad. Toe klouter ek voel-voel na my slaapplekkie en steek dit daar weg tot tyd en wyl ek 'n beter plek kan kry. Ek het besluit om dit liever buitekant iewers te gaan wegsteek, want as hulle ontdek dat die geld weg is, sal hulle heel eerste die huis omkeer. Dit het ek maar alte goed geweet.

Daarna gaan kruip ek in, somer met klere en al; maar my kop was so besig met die hele gedoente dat ek nie sou kon slaap nie, al wou ek. Later hoor ek die koning en die hertog opklim boontoe. Toe wip ek van my matrass af en gaan lê met my ken op die solder- leertjie om te sien of iets gaan gebeur. Maar dit was doodrustig.

So het ek bly lê tot die laat-aand se geluide opgehou het en voor- dat die vroemore s'n begin; en toe glijp ek teen die leer af.

SECTION 27

I crept to their doors and listened; they was snoring, so I tip-toed along, and got down stairs all right. There warn't a sound anywheres. I peeped through a crack of the dining-room door, and see the men that was watching the corpse all sound asleep on their chairs. The door was open into the parlor, where the corpse was laying, and there was a candle in both rooms. I passed along, and the parlor door was open; but I see there warn't nobody in there but the remainders of Peter; so I shoved on by; but the front door was locked, and the key wasn't there. Just then I heard somebody coming down the stairs, back behind me. I run in the parlor, and took a swift look around, and the only place I see to hide the bag was in the coffin. The lid was shoved along about a foot, showing the dead man's face down in there, with a wet cloth over it, and his shroud on. I tucked the money-bag in under the lid, just down beyond where his hands was crossed, which made me creep, they was so cold, and then I run back across the room and in behind the door.

The person coming was Mary Jane. She went to the coffin, very soft, and kneeled down and looked in; then she put up her handkerchief and I see she begun to cry, though I couldn't hear her, and her back was to me. I slid out, and as I passed the dining-room I thought I'd make sure them watchers hadn't seen me; so I looked through the crack and everything was all right. They hadn't stirred.

I slipped up to bed, feeling rather blue, on accounts of the thing playing out that way after I had took so much trouble and run so much risk about it. Says I, if it could stay where it is, all right; because when we get down the river a hundred mile or two, I could write back to Mary Jane, and she could dig him up again and get it; but that ain't the thing that's going to happen; the thing that's going to happen is, the money 'll be found when they come to screw on the lid. Then the king 'll get it again, and it 'll be a long day before he gives anybody another chance to smouch^{e1} it from him. Of course I *wanted* to slide down and get it out of there, but I dasn't try it. Every minute it was getting earlier, now, and pretty soon some of them watchers would begin to stir, and I might get caught—caught with six thousand dollars in my hands that nobody hadn't hired me to take care of. I don't wish to be mixed up in no such business as that, I says to myself.

When I got down stairs in the morning, the parlor was shut up, and the watchers was gone. There warn't nobody around but the family and the widow Bartley and our tribe. I watched their faces to see if anything had been happening, but I couldn't tell.

Towards the middle of the day the undertaker come, with his man, and they set the coffin in the middle of the room on a couple of chairs, and then set all our chairs in rows, and borrowed more from the neighbors till the hall and the parlor and the dining-room was full. I see the coffin lid was the way it was before, but I dasn't go to look in under it, with folks around.

Then the people begun to flock in, and the beats and the girls took seats in the front row at the head of the

coffin, and for a half an hour the people filed around slow, in single rank, and looked down at the dead man's face a minute, and some dropped in a tear, and it was all very still and solemn, only the girls and the beats holding handkerchiefs to their eyes and keeping their heads bent, and sobbing a little. There warn't no other sound but the scraping of the feet on the floor, and blowing noses—because people always blows them more at a funeral than they do at other places except church.

When the place was packed full, the undertaker he slid around in his black gloves with his softy soothing ways, putting on the last touches, and getting people and things all ship-shape and comfortable, and making no more sound than a cat. He never spoke; he moved people around, he squeezed in late ones, he opened up passage-ways, and done it all with nods, and signs with his hands. Then he took his place over against the wall. He was the softest, glidingest, stealthiest man I ever see; and there warn't no more smile to him than there is to a ham.

They had borrowed a melodeum—a sick one; and when everything was ready, a young woman set down and worked it, and it was pretty skreeky and colicky, and everybody joined in and sung, and Peter was the only one that had a good thing, according to my notion. Then the Reverend Hobson opened up, slow and solemn, and begun to talk; and straight off the most outrageous row busted out in the cellar a body ever heard; it was only one dog, but he made a most powerful racket, and he kept it up, right along; the parson he had to stand there, over the coffin, and wait—you couldn't hear yourself think. It was right down

awkward, and nobody didn't seem to know what to do. But pretty soon they see that long-legged undertaker make a sign to the preacher as much as to say, "Don't you worry—just depend on me." Then he stooped down and begun to glide along the wall, just his shoulders showing over the people's heads. So he glided along, and the pow-wow and racket getting more and more outrageous all the time; and at last, when he had gone around two sides of the room, he disappears down cellar. Then, in about two seconds we heard a whack, and the dog he finished up with a most amazing howl or two, and then everything was dead still, and the parson begun his solemn talk where he left off. In a minute or two here comes this undertaker's back and shoulders gliding along the wall again; and so he glided, and glided, around three sides of the room, and then rose up, and shaded his mouth with his hands, and stretched his neck out towards the preacher, over the people's heads, and says, in a kind of a coarse whisper, "*He had a rat!*" Then he drooped down and glided along the wall again to his place. You could see it was a great satisfaction to the people, because naturally they wanted to know. A little thing like that don't cost nothing, and it's just the little things that makes a man to be looked up to and liked. There warn't no more popular man in town than what that undertaker was.

Well, the funeral sermon was very good, but pison long and tiresome; and then the king he shoved in and got off some of his usual rubbage, and at last the job was through, and the undertaker begun to sneak up on the coffin with his screw-driver. I was in a sweat then, and watched him pretty keen. But he never meddled at all;

just slid the lid along, as soft as mush, and screwed it down tight and fast. So there I was! I didn't know whether the money was in there, or not. So, says I, spose somebody has hogged that bag on the sky?—now how do I know whether to write to Mary Jane or not? Spose she dug him up and didn't find nothing—what would she think of me? Blame it, I says, I might get hunted up and jailed; I'd better lay low and keep dark, and not write at all; the thing's awful mixed, now; trying to better it, I've worsened it a hundred times, and I wish to goodness I'd just let it alone, dad fetch the whole business!

They buried him, and we come back home, and I went to watching faces again—I couldn't help it, and I couldn't rest easy. But nothing come of it; the faces didn't tell me nothing.

The king he visited around, in the evening, and sweetened every body up, and made himself ever so friendly; and he give out the idea that his congregation over in England would be in a sweat about him, so he must hurry and settle up the estate right away, and leave for home. He was very sorry he was so pushed, and so was everybody; they wished he could stay longer, but they said they could see it couldn't be done. And he said of course him and William would take the girls home with them; and that pleased everybody too, because then the girls would be well fixed, and amongst their own relations; and it pleased the girls, too—tickled them so they clean forgot they ever had a trouble in the world; and told him to sell out as quick as he wanted to, they would be ready. Them poor things was that glad and happy it made my heart ache to see them getting fooled and lied to so, but I

didn't see no safe way for me to chip in and change the general tune.

Well, blamed if the king didn't bill the house and the niggers and all the property for auction straight off—sale two days after the funeral; hut anybody could buy private beforehand if they wanted to.

So the next day after the funeral, along about noontime, the girls' joy got the first jolt; a couple of nigger traders come along, and the king sold them the niggers reasonable, for three-day drafts as they called it, and away they went, the two sons up the river to Memphis, and their mother down the river to Orleans. I thought them poor girls and them niggers would break their hearts for grief; they cried around each other, and took on so it most made me down sick to see it. The girls said they hadn't ever dreamed of seeing the family separated or sold away from the town. I can't ever get it out of my memory, the sight of them poor miserable girls and niggers^{e2} hanging around each other's necks and crying; and I reckon I couldn't a stood it all but would a had to bust out and tell on our gang if I hadn't knowed the sale warn't no account and the niggers would be back home in a week or two.

The thing made a big stir in the town, too, and a good many come out flat-footed and said it was scandalous to separate the mother and the children that way. It injured the frauds some; but the old fool he bulled right along, spite of all the duke could say or do, and I tell you the duke was powerful uneasy.

Next day was auction day. About broad-day in the morning, the king and the duke come up in the garret

and woke me up, and I see by their look that there was trouble. The king says:

“Was you in my room night before last?”

“No, your majesty”—which was the way I always called him when nobody but our gang warn’t around.

“Was you in there yisterday er last night?”

“No, your majesty.”

“Honor bright, now—no lies.”

“Honor bright, your majesty, I’m telling you the truth. I hain’t been anear your room since Miss Mary Jane took you and the duke and showed it to you.”

The duke says:

“Have you seen anybody else go in there?”

“No, your grace, not as I remember, I believe.”

“Stop and think.”

I studied a while, and see my chance, then I says:

“Well, I see the niggers go in there several times.”

Both of them give a little jump; and looked like they hadn’t ever expected it, and then like they *had*. Then the duke says:

“What, *all* of them?”

“No—leastways not all at once. That is, I don’t think I ever see them all come *out* at once but just one time.”

“Hello—when was that?”

“It was the day we had the funeral. In the morning. It warn’t early, because I overslept. I was just starting down the ladder, and I see them.”

“Well, go on, go on—what did they do? How’d they act?”

“They didn’t do nothing. And they didn’t act anyway, much, as fur as I see. They tip-toed away; so I seen, easy enough, that they’d shoved in there to do up your majesty’s room, or something, sposing you was up; and found you *warn’t* up, and so they was hoping to slide out of the way of trouble without waking you up, if they hadn’t already waked you up.”

“Great guns, *this* is a go!” says the king; and both of them looked pretty sick, and tolerable silly. They stood there a thinking and scratching their heads, a minute, and then the duke he bust into a kind of a little raspy chuckle, and says:

“It does beat all, how neat the niggers played their hand. They let on to be *sorry* they was going out of this region! and I believed they *was* sorry. And so did you, and so did everybody. Don’t ever tell *me* any more that a nigger ain’t got any histrionic talent. Why, the way they played that thing, it would fool *anybody*. In my opinion there’s a fortune in ’em. If I had capital and a theatre, I wouldn’t want a better lay out than that—and here we’ve gone and sold ’em for a song. Yes, and ain’t privileged to sing the song, yet. Say, where is that song?—that draft.”

“In the bank for to be collected. Where *would* it be?”

“Well, *that’s* all right then, thank goodness.”

Says I, kind of timid-like:

“Is something gone wrong?”

The king whirls on me and rips out:

“None o’ your business! You keep your head shet, and mind y’r own affairs—if you got any. Long as you’re in this town, don’t you forgit *that*, you hear?” Then he says to the duke, “We got to jest swaller it, and say noth’n: mum’s the word for *us*.”

As they was starting down the ladder, the duke he chuckles again, and says:

“Quick sales *and* small profits! It’s a good business—yes.”

The king snarls around on him and says,

“I was trying to do for the best, in sellin’ ’m out so quick. If the profits has turned out to be none, lackin’ considable, and none to carry, is it my fault any more’n it’s yourn?”

“Well, *they’d* be in this house yet, and we *wouldn’t* if I could a got my advice listened to.”

The king sassed back, as much as was safe for him, and then swapped around and lit into me again. He give me down the banks²⁷ for not coming and *telling* him I see the niggers come out of his room acting that way—said any fool would a *knowed* something was up. And then waltzed in and cussed *himself* a while; and said it all come of him not laying late and taking

his natural rest that morning, and he'd be blamed if he'd ever do it again. So they went off a jawing; and I felt dreadful glad I'd worked it all off onto the niggers and yet hadn't done the niggers no harm by it.

Chapter 27

ek sluip eers na hulle deure om te luister.

Hulle is aan die snork. Dus glip ek op my tone verder en kom veilig onder aan. Nêrens is daar 'n geluidjie nie. Ek loer deur 'n skreef in die eetkamerdeur en sien dat die mans wat by die lyk sit en waak, almal vas aan die slaap op hulle stoele sit. Die deur na die portaal toe, waar die lyk lê, staan oop, en in elke kamer is daar 'n kers. Ek sluip verby en sien dat ook die portaaldeur oopstaan, maar daar- binne is daar net Peter se oorskot, dus glip ek ongestoord dáár ook verby. Maar die voordeur was gesluit en die sleutel was skoonveld. Net toe hoor ek iemand agter my by die trap afkom. Ek wip in die portaal in, kyk 'n slag vinnig rond en sien dat daar net één plek is om die geldsak weg te steek: binne-in die doodkis. Die deksel was so 'n voet ver weggeskuif sodat mens die dooie man se gesig kon sien, met 'n nat doek daaroor; die res van sy lyf was toegedraai in die doodskleed. Ek druk toe die geld onder die deksel in, net verby die plek waar sy gevoude hande lê—en hulle voel so koud dat dit my skoon rillings gee—en toe hardloop ek terug na die oorkant van die kamer en gaan kruip agter die deur weg.

Dit was Mary-Jane wat agter my aangekom het. Sy gaan suutjies na die doodkis toe, kniel daarby en kyk binne-in; toe lig sy haar sakdoek op en ek kon sien dat sy begin huil, al kon ek niks hoor nie en al staan sy met haar rug na my toe. Saggies sluip ek daar uit; toe ek by die eetkamer verbykom, besluit ek om net gou seker te maak dat die wakers my nie gewaar het nie, en ek gaan loer weer deur die skreef. Maar alles was nog rustig; hulle het nie 'n lid verroer nie.

Ek gaan toe maar terug bed toe, taamlik bek-af oor die manier waarop die saak uitgedraai het nadat ek soveel moeite gedoen het en soveel gevaar geloop het. As die geld nou daar blý, dag ek, dan's dit orraait. Want as ons so 'n honderd myl of wat verder stroom-af is, kan ek aan Mary-Jane skryf en dan kan sy hom weer laat opgrawe en die geld kry. Maar dis nié wat gaan gebeur nie. Wat gáán gebeur, is dat hulle die geld gaan kry nes hulle die deksel vasskroef. En dan gaan die koning dit weer in die hande kry—en dán gaan niemand dit weer onder sy neus wegsteel nie. Ek *wou* natuurlik graag ondertoe gaan en dit gaan haal, maar ek durf dit nie waag nie. Elke minuut

was dit nou besig om vroeër en vroeër te word, en netnou gaan die wakers begin roer en dan word ek gevang—gevang met sesduisend dollars in my besit sonder dat iemand my aangesê het om iets daar- mee aan te vang. En in só 'n moles wil ek my nie begewe nie, besluit ek by myselfers.

Toe ek die more onder kom, was die portaal toegesluit en die wakers vort. Behalwe die familie en weduwee Bartley en ons drie was daar g'n sterfling nie. Ek het hulle gesigte goed dopgehou om te sien of daar dalk iets gebeur het, maar ek kon niks agterkom nie.

So teen die middag het die ondernemer en sy handlanger opgedaag en die doodkis in die middel van die kamer op 'n paar stoele neerge- sit, en toe al ons stoele in rye gepak en nog ander by die bure gaan haal tot die hele portaal en eetkamer vol was. Ek kon sien dat die deksel nog nes tevore lê, maar met al die mense daar in die rondte kon ek dit nie waag om te gaan loer nie.

Toe begin die mense opdaag, en die rouklaers en die dogters gaan in die voorste ry aan die kis se kopkant sit, en 'n halfuur lank kom die mense stadig en een-een verby, en elkeen kyk 'n rukkie lank na die dooie man se gesig, en party stort 'n traan, en alles is doodstil en plegtig, met net die dogters en die rouklaers wat met geboë koppe en sakdoeke teen hulle oë daar sit en 'n bietjie snik. Die enigste ander geluid was die geskuiwel van die voete oor die vloer, en die snuiterij— want mens snuit mos altyd meer by 'n begrafnis as op enige ander plek behalwe in die kerk.

Toe die kamer vol is, begin die ondernemer met sy swart hand- skoene en sy paaierige maniertjies rondsluip om die laaste dingetjies af te rond en almal en alles mooi reg en gemaklik te kry, en die hele tyd beweeg hy so suutjies soos 'n kat. Hy sê nie 'n woord nie; hy ver- skuiwe die mense en prop laatkommers in en maak looppaadjies oop, alles net met kopknikke en handgebare. En eindelik gaan sit hy op sy stoel teen die muur. Hy was nou rêrig die sagste, suutjieste, sluipe- rigste mens wat ek ooit gesien het; en van 'n glimlag was daar op sy gesig net so min teken as op 'n skaapkop.

Hulle het 'n harmoniumpie geleen—'n sieklike een. En toe alles nou gereed was, het 'n jong vrou daarby gaan sit en aan die ding begin swoeg. Dit was maar 'n taamlike skreërige, kwêerige geluid, maar almal het saamgesing—en by myselfers het ek gedink dis eintlik net Peter wat dit goed getref het. Toe begin dominee Hobson te praat, stadig en gewigtig; en skielik bars daar onder in die kelder die gruwelikste lawaai uit wat jy nóg gehoor het: dit was net een hond, maar hy skop 'n bohaai op dat hoor en sien vergaan, en hy hou áán, aanmekaar. Die dominee moes maar daar by die kis staan en wag—mens kon jouself nie hoor dink nie. Dit was maar 'n taamlike ongemaklike spulletjie en niemand het juis mooi geweet wat om te doen nie. Maar na 'n rukkie sien die mense dat die langbeen-ondernemer 'n gebaartjie vir die dominee maak asof hy wil sê: „Moenie bekommerd wees nie—laat dit maar aan my oor.” Toe buig hy vooroor en begin al teen die muur langs gly, sodat mens net sy skouers bokant die mense se koppe sien uitsteek. Hy gly al verder en intussen word die onaardse lawaai al erger; eindelik, nadat hy al met twee

mure van die kamer langs gegly het, verdwyn die ondernemer in die rigting van die kelder. Omtrent twee sekondes later hoor ons 'n slag, gevolg deur 'n paar ongelooflike tjankgeluide van die hond, en toe's dit doodstil, en die predikant hervat sy gewichtige toespraak van waar hy opgehou het. 'n Minuut of wat daarna; hier kom die ondernemer se rug en skouers weer teen die muur langs aange gly; en hy gly en gly, teen drie mure van die kamer verby; en toe lig hy hom orent, hou sy mond half toe met sy hand, steek sy kop ver vorentoe en fluister taamlik hard: „Hy't 'n rot gevang.” Toe verlep hy weer en gly-giy al met die muur langs na sy sitplek toe. Jy kon sien die mense voel nou almal weer tevrede, want hulle wou van selfsprekend graag weet. 'n Klein dingetjie soos dié kos niks, maar dis juis sulke klein dingetjies wat maak dat mense na iemand opsien en van hom hou. Daardie ondernemer was sekerlik die gewildste man in die hele dorp.

Nou ja, die begrafnispraak was baie goed, maar gruwelooslik lank en vervelig, en daarna het die koning toe ook nog weer opgestaan en 'n klomp van sy gewone kaf kwytergaa, en eindelik was alles verby en die ondernemer begin die kis met sy skroewedraaier bekrui. Ek was so benoud dat ek kon doodgaan en ek het nie my oë van hom af weggeneem nie. Maar hy't niks gelol nie, net die deksel toegeskuif, suutjies en gladweg, en dit toe styf vasgeskroef. Daar sit ek toe! Ek het glad nie geweet of die geld nog daar was nie. En sê nou maar iemand het dit stilletjies vasgelê? Hoe sou ek nou weet of ek vir Mary-Jane kon skryf of nie? Sê nou sy grawe hom op en kry niks nie—wat sal sy dan van my dink? Hemel, dalk kom sock hulle my en smyt my in die tronk daaroor. Dus moes ek nou maar liewer stilbly en glad nie skryf nie, die saak was glad te deurmekaar—en my poging om dit te verbeter het dit net 'n honderd maal vererger. As ek maar liewer die hele vervlakste affêre met rus gelaat het!

Hulle't hom begrawe en ons het teruggekom huis toe en ek het weer begin om die gesigte dop te hou—ek kon dit net nie help nie; ek was die heeltyd onrustig. Maar dit het niks gebaat nie: uit die gesigte kon ek niks wys word nie.

Die aand het die koning rondgestap en almal in 'n vriendelike bui gebring en hom tog te liefies gedra; en hy't begin praat oor sy gemeente in Engeland wat so bekommerd oor hom is dat hy maar gou sal moet klaarspeel met die boedel sodat hy kan teruggaan. Hy was bitter jammer dat hy nou so haastig moes wees, en al die ander was net so jammer—hulle't gewens hy kon langer bly, maar hulle kon darem ook verstaan dat dit nie moontlik was nie. En hy't gesê hy en William sal natuurlik die dogters saam met hulle terugneem. Daaroor was die mense baie bly, want nou sou die meisies mos goed versorg wees, en by hulle eie familie. Die dogters self was ook bly—hulle was só in hulle skik dat hulle skoon van hulle sorge vergeet het. Hy kon maar verkoop so gou as wat hy kan, het hulle hom verseker: hulle sou gereed wees. Die arme goed was so bly en gelukkig dat dit my hart skoon seergemaak het om te sien hoe hulle verkul en belieg word, maar ek het net nie kans gesien om

tussenbeide te kom en iets aan die saak te verander nie.

En toe loop adverteer die koning sowaar sommer daar en dan die huis en die slawe en die goed: oor twee dae sou die vendusie plaas- vind.maar enigiemand kon uit die hand uit koop as hy vooraf lus voel.

Net die dag ná die begrafnis, hier teen die middag, het die meisies se blydschap toe sy eerste skok gekry: 'n paar slawehandelaars het daar aangekom en die koning het die slawe teen 'n redelike prys ver- koop, vir driedaewissels soos die goed genoem word, en daar trek hulle—die twee seuns stroom-op na Memphis toe, en hulle ma stroom-af na Orleans. Dit het vir my gelyk of die arme meisiekinders en die slawe se harte gaan breek van jammerte, so het hulle gehuil en te kere gegaan; dit het my skoon siek laat voel net om dit te aanskou. Die meisies het nooit gedink die gesin sou geskei word of uit die dorp uit verkoop word nie. Ek sal dit nooit vergeet nie: die arme treurige meisiekinders en die negers wat so om mekaar se nekke hang en huil; en ek skat ek sou dit net nie langer kon verduur nie, en ek sou alles oor die kullery daar en dan uitgelap het as ek nie geweet het die transaksie is ongeldig en die slawe sal weer oor 'n week of twee terug- kom nie.

Die ding het 'n groot bohaai in die dorp veroorsaak en 'n hele klomp mense het ronduit gesê dis 'n skande om die ma en kinders so te skei. Dit het die skelms bietjie gekwets, maar die ou swaap het volgehou met sy planne, wat die hertog ook al gesê of gedoen het—en ek kan julle dit sê: die hertog het maar taamlik onrustig gevoel.

Die volgende dag was dit toe vendusie. Net toe die son die more mooi hoog-uit sit, kom die koning en die hertog daar in my solder- kamertjie in en maak my wakker.

„Was jy eergisteraand in my kamer ?” vra die koning.

„Nee, u majesteit”—dis hoe ek hom altyd genoem het as ons klompie alleen bymekaar was.

„Was jy gister daar, of laasnag?”

„Nee, u majesteit.”

„Op jou woord nou—g'n leuens nie.”

„Op my woord u majesteit. Ek praat die waarheid. Ek was nie naby die kamer vandat Mary-Jane dit vir jou en die hertog gaan wys het nie.”

„Het jy dalk iemand anders daar sien ingaan?” vra die hertog.

„Nee, u edele, nie wat ek kan onthou nie.”

„Dink goed.”

Ek sit 'n rukkie en hinkel, besluit skielik om my kans waar te neem, en sê: „Wel, ek het die negers 'n hele paar keer daar sien ingaan.”

Hulle wip altwee so effens, en eers lyk dit of hulle dit glad nie te wagte was nie, en toe weer asof hulle was.

Toe vra die hertog: „Al die negers?”

„Nee—ten minste, nie almal tegelyk nie. Dis te sê, ek kan net van een keer onthou dat ek hulle almal saam sien uitkom het.”

„Wat? Wanneer?”

„Die dag van die begrafnis. Die oggend. Nie so danig vroeg nie, want ek het my verslaap. Ek wou net met die leer afgaan toe ek hulle gewaar.”

„En toe? *En toe?* Opskud man—wat het hulle gedoen? Hoe’t hulle gelyk?”

„Hulle’t niks gedoen nie. Hulle’t ook nes altyd gelyk, vir sover ék kon uitmaak. Hulle’t op hulle tone weggesluip. Toe besef ek dadelik hulle’t daar in u majesteit se kamer ingegaan om iets daar te gaan doen of iets soontoe te neem, en gedink jy’s al wakker, en toe sien hulle seker jy’s nog *nie* wakker nie, en toe probeer hulle wegkom voor hulle jou dalk wakker maak—tensy hulle jou toe al klaar wakker gemaak het.”

„Hemel, *dis* nou vir jou ’n ding!” sê die koning en hulle lyk maar altwee taamlik misrawel en verspot. Hulle staan ’n ruk daar en dink en kopkrap, toe begin die hertog so half hakkelig lag en hy sê:

„Daardie negers was darem nou wragtie vir jou geslepe, hoor. Hulle maak mooi-tjies of hulle *jammer* is om hier weg te gaan—en ek het regtig gedink hulle *is* jammer. En jy’t ook so gedink. Al die ander mense ook. Moenie weer vir my kom vertel ’n neger kan nie toneel speel nie. Dié ding van hulle was genoeg om enigiemand om die bos te lei. Mens kan ’n fortuin maak uit hulle, as jy my vra. As ek kapi- taal gehad het, en ’n teater, dan was daar vir my g’n beter belegging op aarde nie. En hier loop verkoop ons hulle vir ’n appel en ’n ei. En ons kan dit nog nie eers gebruik nie. Terloops: waar is daardie appel-en-ei van ons?”

„In die bank waar ons dit moet gaan wissel. Waar anders?”

„Hm, dan’s dit darem ten minste in orde, dank die vader.”

„Is daar dan iets verkeerd?” vra ek so half versigtig.

Die koning wip dadelik om na my toe en skree: „Hou jou neus hier uit! Hou jy jou snater en bepaal jou by jou eie sake—ás jy sake van jou eie het. Onthou dit solank as wat ons hier in die dorp is, gehoor?” En hy sê vir die hertog: „Ons moet dit dan maar sluk en niks sê nie. Stilbly, dís wat ons moet doen.”

Net toe hulle met die leer begin afgaan, lag die hertog weer so half by homself en sê: „Vinnig verkoop en groot wins. Dis rêrig goeie sake, ja!”

Woedend kef die koning: „Ek het net gedink dis ’n goeie ding om gou van hulle ontslae te raak. En as ons nou op die ou end met g’n wins sit nie, net met ’n slegte verlies, is dit miskien net my skuld? Wat van jou?”

„As dit van my afgehang het, dan was hulle nou nog hier in die huis. En as jy na my raad geluister het, dan was ons dit nou nie alles kwyt nie.”

Die koning begin weer terugskel tot hy voel dit begin nou gevaarlik raak vir hom, en toe draai hy om en vlie my weer in. Hy skel my uit omdat ek hom nie dadelik kom sê het dat ek die slawe by sy kamer sien uitkom het en dat hulle gemaak het soos hulle gemaak het nie— enige swaap kon glo *sien* daar’s êrens ’n slang in die gras. Toe begin hy homsêlf weer ’n ruk lank slegsê: dit kom daarvan dat hy nie laat geslaap en sy gewone bietjie rus gekry het nie; moenie dink hy sal dit ooit wêér doen nie. En so loop hulle weg, raas-raas; en

ek voel in my noppies dat ek die skuld alles op die slawe gepak kon kry—en dit sonder om die slawe self enige skade aan te doen.

SECTION 28

By-and-by it was getting-up time; so I come down the ladder and started for down stairs, but as I come to the girls' room, the door was open, and I see Mary Jane setting by her old hair trunk, which was open and she'd been packing things in it—getting ready to go to England. But she had stopped now, with a folded gown in her lap, and had her face in her hands, crying. I felt awful bad to see it; of course anybody would. I went in there, and says:

“Miss Mary Jane, you can't abear to see people in trouble, and / can't—most always. Tell me about it.”

So she done it. And it was the niggers—I just expected it. She said the beautiful trip to England was most about spoiled for her; she didn't know *how* she was ever going to be happy there, knowing the mother and the children warn't ever going to see each other no more—and then busted out bitterer than ever, and flung up her hands, and says:

“Oh, dear, dear, to think they ain't *ever* going to see each other any more!”

“But they *will*—and inside of two weeks—and I *know* it!” says I.

Laws it was out before I could think!—and before I could budge, she throws her arms around my neck, and told me to say it *again*, say it *again*, say it *again*!

I see I had spoke too sudden, and said too much, and

was in a close place. I asked her to let me think a minute; and she set there, very impatient and excited, and handsome, but looking kind of happy and eased-up, like a person that's had a tooth pulled out. So I went to studying it out. I says to myself, I reckon a body that ups and tells the truth when he is in a tight place, is taking considerable many resks, though I ain't had no experience, and can't say for certain; but it looks so to me, anyway; and yet here's a case where I'm blest if it don't look to me like the truth is better, and actuly *safer*, than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over some time or other, it's so kind of strange and unregular. I never see nothing like it. Well, I says to myself at last, I'm agoing to chance it; I'll up and tell the truth this time, though it does seem most like setting down on a kag of powder and touching it off just to see where you'll go to. Then I says:

"Miss Mary Jane, is there any place out of town a little ways, where you could go and stay three or four days?"

"Yes—Mr. Lothrop's. Why?"

"Never mind why, yet. If I'll tell you how I know the niggers will see each other again—inside of two weeks—here in this house—and *prove* how I know it—will you go to Mr. Lothrop's and stay four days?"

"Four days!" she says; "I'll stay a year!"

"All right," I says, "I don't want nothing more out of *you* than just your word—I druther have it than another man's kiss-the-Bible." She smiled, and reddened up very sweet, and I says, "If you don't mind it, I'll shut the door—and bolt it."

Then I come back and set down again, and says:

“Don’t you holler. Just set still, and take it like a man. I got to tell the truth, and you want to brace up, Miss Mary, because it’s a bad kind, and going to be hard to take, but there ain’t no help for it. These uncles of yourn ain’t no uncles at all—they’re a couples of frauds—regular dead-beats. There, now we’re over the worst of it—you can stand the rest middling easy.”

It jolted her up like everything, of course; but I was over the shoal water now, so I went right along, her eyes a blazing higher and higher all the time, and told her every blame thing, from where we first struck that young fool going up to the steamboat, clear through to where she flung herself onto the king’s breast at the front door and he kissed her sixteen or seventeen times—and then up she jumps, with her face afire like sunset, and says:

“The brute! Come—don’t waste a minute—not a *second*—we’ll have them tarred and feathered, and flung in the river!”

Says I:

“Cert’nly. But do you mean, *before* you go to Mr. Lothrop’s, or——”

“Oh,” she says, “what am I *thinking* about!” she says, and set right down again. “Don’t mind what I said—please don’t—you *won’t*, now, *will* you?” Laying her silky hand on mine in that kind of a way that I said I would die first. “I never thought, I was so stirred up,” she says; “now go on, and I won’t do so any more. You tell me what to do, and whatever you say, I’ll do it.”

“Well,” I says, “it’s a rough gang, them two frauds, and I’m fixed so I got to travel with them a while longer, whether I want to or not—I druther not tell you why—and if you was to blow on them this town would get me out of their claws, and I’d be all right, but there’d be another person that you don’t know about who’d be in big trouble. Well, we got to save *him*, hain’t we? Of course. Well, then, we won’t blow on them.”

Saying them words put a good idea in my head. I see how maybe I could get me and Jim rid of the frauds; get them jailed here, and then leave. But I didn’t want to run the raft in daytime, without anybody aboard to answer questions but me; so I didn’t want the plan to begin working till pretty late to-night. I says:

“Miss Mary Jane, I’ll tell you what we’ll do—and you won’t have to stay at Mr. Lothrop’s so long, nuther. How fur is it?”

“A little short of four miles—right out in the country, back here.”

“Well, that’ll answer. Now you go along out there, and lay low till nine or half-past, to-night, and then get them to fetch you home again—tell them you’ve thought of something. If you get here before eleven, put a candle in this window, and if I don’t turn up, wait *till* eleven, and *then* if I don’t turn up it means I’m gone, and out of the way, and safe. Then you come out and spread the news around, and get these beats jailed.”

“Good,” she says, “I’ll do it.”

“And if it just happens so that I don’t get away, but get took up along with them, you must up and say I told

you the whole thing beforehand, and you must stand by me all you can.”

“Stand by you, indeed I will. They sha’n’t touch a hair of your head!” she says, and I see her nostrils spread and her eyes snap when she said it, too.

“If I get away, I sha’n’t be here,” I says, “to prove these rapsCALLIONS ain’t your uncles, and I couldn’t do it if I *was* here. I could swear they was beats and bummers, that’s all; though that’s worth something. Well, there’s others can do that better than what I can—and they’re people that ain’t going to be doubted as quick as I’d be. I’ll tell you how to find them. Gimme a pencil and a piece of paper. There—‘*Royal None such, Bricksville*^{e1}.’ Put it away, and don’t lose it. When the court wants to find out something about these two, let them send up to Bricksville and say they’ve got the men that played the Royal Nonesuch, and ask for some witnesses—why, you’ll have that entire town down here before you can hardly wink, Miss Mary. And they’ll come a-biling, too.”

I judged we had got everything fixed about right, now. So I says:

“Just let the auction go right along, and don’t worry. Nobody don’t have to pay for the things they buy till a whole day after the auction, on accounts of the short notice, and they ain’t going out of this till they get that money—and the way we’ve fixed it the sale ain’t going to count, and they ain’t going to *get* no money. It’s just like the way it was with the niggers—it warn’t no sale, and the niggers will be back before long. Why, they can’t collect the money for the *niggers*, yet—they’re in

the worst kind of a fix, Miss Mary.”

“Well,” she says, “I’ll run down to breakfast now, and then I’ll start straight for Mr. Lothrop’s.”

“Deed, *that* ain’t the ticket, Miss Mary Jane,” I says, “by no manner of means; go *before* breakfast.”

“Why?”

“What did you reckon I wanted you to go at all for, Miss Mary?”

“Well, I never thought—and come to think, I don’t know. What was it?”

“Why, it’s because you ain’t one of these leather-face people. I don’t want no better book than what your face is. A body can set down and read it off like coarse print. Do you reckon you can go and face your uncles, when they come to kiss you good-morning, and never
——”

“There, there, don’t! Yes, I’ll go before breakfast—I’ll be glad to. And leave my sisters with them?”

“Yes—never mind about them. They’ve got to stand it yet a while. They might suspicion something if all of you was to go. I don’t want you to see them, nor your sisters, nor nobody in this town—if a neighbor was to ask how is your uncles this morning, your face would tell something. No, you go right along, Miss Mary Jane, and I’ll fix it with all of them. I’ll tell Miss Susan to give your love to your uncles and say you’ve went away for a few hours for to get a little rest and change, or to see a friend, and you’ll be back to-night or early in the

morning.”

“Gone to see a friend is all right, but I won’t have my love given to them.”

“Well, then, it sha’n’t be.” It was well enough to tell *her* so—no harm in it. It was only a little thing to do, and no trouble; and it’s the little things that smoothes people’s roads the most, down here below; it would make Mary Jane comfortable, and it wouldn’t cost nothing. Then I says: “There’s one more thing—that bag of money.”

“Well, they’ve got that; and it makes me feel pretty silly to think *how* they got it.”

“No, you’re out, there. They hain’t got it.”

“Why, who’s got it?”

“I wish I knowed, but I don’t. I *had* it, because I stole it from them: and I stole it to give to you; and I know where I hid it, but I’m afraid it ain’t there no more. I’m awful sorry, Miss Mary Jane, I’m just as sorry as I can be; but I done the best I could; I did, honest. I come nigh getting caught, and I had to shove it into the first place I come to, and run—and it warn’t a good place.”

“Oh, stop blaming yourself—it’s too bad to do it, and I won’t allow it—you couldn’t help it; it wasn’t your fault. Where did you hide it?”

I didn’t want to set her to thinking about her troubles again; and I couldn’t seem to get my mouth to tell her what would make her see that corpse laying in the coffin with that bag of money on his stomach. So for a minute I didn’t say nothing—then I says:

"I'd ruther not *tell* you where I put it, Miss Mary Jane, if you don't mind letting me off; but I'll write it for you on a piece of paper, and you can read it along the road to Mr. Lothrop's, if you want to. Do you reckon that'll do?"

"Oh, yes."

So I wrote: "I put it in the coffin. It was in there when you was crying there, away in the night. I was behind the door, and I was mighty sorry for you, Miss Mary Jane."

It made my eyes water a little, to remember her crying there all by herself in the night, and them devils laying there right under her own roof, shaming her and robbing her; and when I folded it up and give it to her, I see the water come into her eyes, too; and she shook me by the hand, hard, and says:

"*Good-bye*—I'm going to do everything just as you've told me; and if I don't ever see you again, I sha'n't ever forget you, and I'll think of you a many and a many a time, and I'll *pray* for you, too!"—and she was gone.

Pray for me! I reckoned if she knowed me she'd take a job that was more nearer her size. But I bet she done it, just the same—she was just that kind. She had the grit to pray for Judus if she took the notion—there warn't no backdown to her, I judge. You may say what you want to, but in my opinion she had more sand in her^{e2} than any girl I ever see; in my opinion she was just full of sand. It sounds like flattery, but it ain't no flattery. And when it comes to beauty—and goodness too—she lays over them all. I hain't ever seen her since that time that I see her go out of that door; no, I hain't ever seen her since, but I reckon I've thought of

her a many and a many a million times, and of her saying she would pray for me; and if ever I'd a thought it would do any good for me to pray for *her*, blamed if I wouldn't a done it or bust.

Well, Mary Jane she lit out the back way, I reckon; because nobody see her go. When I struck Susan and the hare-lip, I says:

"What's the name of them people over on t'other side of the river that you all goes to see sometimes?"

They says:

"There's several; but it's the Proctors, mainly."

"That's the name," I says; "I most forgot it. Well, Miss Mary Jane she told me to tell you she's gone over there in a dreadful hurry—one of them's sick."

"Which one?"

"I don't know; leastways I kinder forget; but I think it's _____"

"Sakes alive, I hope it ain't *Hanner*?"

"I'm sorry to say it," I says, "but Hanner's the very one."

"My goodness—and she so well only last week! Is she took bad?"

"It ain't no name for it. They set up with her all night, Miss Mary Jane said, and they don't think she'll last many hours."

"Only think of that, now! What's the matter with her!"

I couldn't think of anything reasonable, right off that way, so I says:

"Mumps."

"Mumps your granny! They don't set up with people that's got the mumps."

"They don't, don't they? You better bet they do with *these* mumps. These mumps is different. It's a new kind, Miss Mary Jane said."

"How's it a new kind?"

"Because it's mixed up with other things."

"What other things?"

"Well, measles, and whooping-cough and erysipelas, and consumption, and yaller janders, and brain fever, and I don't know what all."

"My land! And they call it the *mumps*?"

"That's what Miss Mary Jane said."

"Well, what in the nation do they call it the *mumps* for?"

"Why, because it *is* the mumps. That's what it starts with."

"Well, ther' ain't no sense in it. A body might stump his toe, and take pison, and fall down the well, and break his neck, and bust his brains out, and somebody come along and ask what killed him, and some numskull up and say, 'Why, he stumped his *toe*.' Would ther' be any sense in that? *No*. And ther' ain't no sense in *this*, nuther. Is it ketching?"

"Is it *ketching*? Why, how you talk. Is a *harrow* catching?—in the dark? If you don't hitch onto one tooth, you're bound to on another, ain't you? And you can't get away with that tooth without fetching the whole harrow along, can you? Well, these kind of mumps is a kind of a harrow, as you may say—and it ain't no slouch of a harrow, nuther, you come to get it hitched on good."

"Well, it's awful, *I* think," says the hare-lip. "I'll go to Uncle Harvey and——"

"Oh, yes," *I* says, "*I would*. Of *course* *I* would. *I* wouldn't lose no time."

"Well, why wouldn't you?"

"Just look at it a minute, and maybe you can see. Hain't your uncles obleeged to get along home to England as fast as they can? And do you reckon they'd be mean enough to go off and leave you to go all that journey by yourselves? *You* know they'll wait for you. So fur, so good. Your uncle Harvey's a preacher, ain't he? Very well, then; is a *preacher* going to deceive a steamboat clerk? is he going to deceive a *ship clerk*?—so as to get them to let Miss Mary Jane go aboard? Now *you* know he ain't. What *will* he do, then? Why, he'll say, 'It's a great pity, but my church matters has got to get along the best way they can; for my niece has been exposed to the dreadful pluribus-unum mumps^{e3}, and so it's my bounden duty to set down here and wait the three months it takes to show on her if she's got it.' But never mind, if you think it's best to tell your uncle Harvey——"

"Shucks, and stay fooling around here when we could

all be having good times in England whilst we was waiting to find out whether Mary Jane's got it or not? Why, you talk like a muggins."

"Well, anyway, maybe you better tell some of the neighbors."

"Listen at that, now. You do beat all, for natural stupidity. Can't you *see* that *they'd* go and tell? Ther' ain't no way but just to not tell anybody at *all*."

"Well, maybe you're right—yes, I judge you *are* right."

"But I reckon we ought to tell Uncle Harvey she's gone out a while, anyway, so he won't be uneasy about her?"

"Yes, Miss Mary Jane she wanted you to do that. She says, 'Tell them to give Uncle Harvey and William my love and a kiss, and say I've run over the river to see Mr.—Mr.—what *is* the name of that rich family your uncle Peter used to think so much of?—I mean the one that——'"

"Why, you must mean the Apthorps, ain't it?"

"Of course; bother them kind of names, a body can't ever seem to remember them, half the time, somehow. Yes, she said, say she has run over for to ask the Apthorps to be sure and come to the auction and buy this house, because she allowed her uncle Peter would ruther they had it than anybody else; and she's going to stick to them till they say they'll come, and then, if she ain't too tired, she's coming home; and if she is, she'll be home in the morning anyway. She said, don't say nothing about the Proctors, but only

about the Apthorps—which'll be perfectly true, because she *is* going there to speak about their buying the house; I know it, because she told me so, herself."

"All right," they said, and cleared out to lay for their uncles, and give them the love and the kisses, and tell them the message.

Everything was all right now. The girls wouldn't say nothing because they wanted to go to England; and the king and the duke would rather Mary Jane was off working for the auction than around in reach of Doctor Robinson. I felt very good; I judged I had done it pretty neat—I reckoned Tom Sawyer couldn't a done it no neater himself. Of course he would a throwed more style into it, but I can't do that very handy, not being brung up to it.

Well, they held the auction in the public square, along towards the end of the afternoon, and it strung along, and strung along, and the old man he was on hand and looking his level pisonest, up there longside of the auctioneer, and chipping in a little Scripture, now and then, or a little goody-goody saying, of some kind, and the duke he was around goo-gooing for sympathy all he knowed how, and just spreading himself generly.

But by-and-by the thing dragged through, and everything was sold. Everything but a little old trifling lot in the graveyard. So they'd got to work *that* off—I never see such a girafft as the king was for wanting to swallow *everything*. Well, whilst they was at it, a steamboat landed, and in about two minutes up comes a crowd a whooping and yelling and laughing and carrying on, and singing out:

“Here’s your opposition line^{e4}! here’s your two sets o’ heirs to old Peter Wilks—and you pays your money and you takes your choice!”

Chapter 28

Kort daarna was dit opstaantyd en ek klim met die leer af om ondertoe te gaan, maar toe ek by die meisiekinders se kamer verbykom, sien ek die deur staan oop—en daar binne ge- waar ek Mary-Jane by haar ou koffer sit, besig om in te pak vir die ganery Engeland toe. Maar op die oomblik doen sy niks: sy sit net daar met ’n opgevoude rok op haar skoot, aan ’t huil met haar gesig in haar hande. Dit het my bitter sleg laat voel om haar so te sien. Wie sou nie? Dus gaan ek binne en ek sê vir haar:

„Juffrou Mary-Jane, ek weet jy kan dit nie verduur om mense in die moeilikheid te sien nie—en ek kan ook nie. Vertel my wat makeer.”

Toe vertel sy. Dit was oor die slawe, nes ek verwag het. Die hele heerlike reis Engeland toe is vir haar skoon bederf daardeur, sê sy. Hoe sal sy óóit daar gelukkig kan wees terwyl sy weet dat die ma en kinders mekaar nooit weer gaan sien nie? En toe begin sy nog meer huil as tevore en sy gooi haar hande in die lug en sê:

„Ag tog, ag! Om te dink hulle gaan mekaar *nooit* weer sien nie!” „Nee,” sê ek. „Hulle gaan—binne twee weke. Ek weet dit.”

Gits, dit het uitgeslip voor ek kon keer. En voor ek ’n lid kon ver- roer, slaan sy haar arms om my nek en smee my om dit weer en weer te sê.

Ek het goed geweet dat ek nou my mond skoon verbygepraat het en in ’n hoek beland het. Toe vra ek haar maar eers om my kans te gee om na te dink. Intussen sit sy bitter ongeduldig en opgewonde en pragtig en wag, maar daarby lyk sy so half verlig en gelukkig soos iemand wat ’n tand laat trek het. Ek begin die saak toe oordink. Kyk, besluit ek, iemand wat met die waarheid vorendag kom wanneer hy in die knyp sit, soek moeilikheid, al kan ek nou nie juis van onder- vinding praat nie—maat dit *lyk* vir my so. Maar hier is daar nou tog ’n geval waar dit wil lyk of die waarheid sowaar beter—en *veiliger*—gaan wees as ’n leuen. Ek moet dit ’n bietjie onthou, dink ek, sodat ek dit later weer ’n slag kan oorweeg, want dit lyk darem alte snaaks en ongewoon. Ek het nog nooit so iets teengekom nie. Nou ja, oplaas besluit ek toe ek gaan dit waag en ’n slag die waarheid vertel, al lyk dit komplete asof mens ’n kruitvaatjie aan die brand steek net om te sien waar jy gaan beland.

Toe vra ek: „Juffrou Mary-Jane, is daar dalk ’n plek ’n entjie buitekant die dorp waar jy ’n drie, vier dae kan gaan bly?”

„Ja, by mn. Lothrop. Hoekom?”

„Maak nie saak hoekom nie. As ek jou sê hoekom ek weet dat die slawe

mekaar binne twee weke weei; gaan sien—hier in hierdie huis—en ek bewys jou dat ek dit weet, sal jy dan vir vier dae na meneer Lothrop toe gaan?”

„Vier dae?” vra sy. „Ek sal ’n jaar lank daar bly!”

„Nou goed,” sê ek. „Al wat ek wil hê, is jou woord. Ek dink dis meer werd as iemand anders se sweer-op-die-Bybel.” Dit laat haar giïmlag en tog te mooi bloos, en ek sê: „As jy nie omgee nie, dan gaan maak ek eers die deur toe—én grendel dit.”

Toe kom ek weer na haar toe en gaan sit, en sê: „Moenie nou begin grens nie. Bly net doodstil sit en dra dit soos ’n man. Ek gaan jou die waarheid vertel en ek wil hê jy moet jou staal daarvoor, juffrou Mary, want dis ’n nare soort waarheid en jy gaan dit swaar sluk, maar daar’s g’n ander genade nie. Die ooms van jou is nooit jou ooms nie. Hulle’s skelms, uitgetrapte skurke. Nou ja toe, nou’s ons verby die ergste. Die res sal jy makliker kan verduur.”

Dit het haar natuurlik ’n kwaai skok gegee, maar ek was nou anderkant die vlakwater, en ek hou enduit vol terwyl haar oë al helderder en helderder gloei. Ek vertel haar die hele ganse storie van waar ons die jong swaap gekry het wat op pad na die stoomboot toe was, tot waar sy die koning by die voordeur omhels het en hy haar sestien of sewentien keer gesoen het. Toe ek dáár kom, spring sy op, met ’n gesig wat gloei soos ’n sonsondergang, en sy sê: „Die skurk! Komaan, ons mag g’n minuut langer versuim nie—g’n *sekonde* langer nie! Ons moet sorg dat hulle geteer-en-veer word en in die rivier beland!”

„Natuurlik,” antwoord ek. „Maar wil jy dit dan sommer *nou* doen, nog vóór jy na meneer Lothrop toe gaan, of. . . ?”

„O,” sê sy. „Wat makeer my tog?” En sy gaan weer sit. „Moenie jou steur aan wat ek sê nie. Asseblief, moenie.” Sy lê haar sagte hand op myne—en dit was genoeg om my te laat sweer dat ek eerder sou doodgaan as om haar daaroor kwalik te neem. „Ek was so opge- wonde dat ek net nie gedink het nie,” gaan sy voort. „Praat jy nou klaar, ek sal nie weer nie. Sê jy vir my wat om te doen. Wát jy ook al sê, sal ek doen.”

„Nou kyk,” sê ek. „Die twee skurke is gewetenlose mense, en of ek nou daarvan hou of nie, ek moet nog ’n ruk lank saam met hulle reis—ek sal jou liewer nie sê hoekom nie. As jy hulle nou gaan ver- klap, sal die dorp my uit hulle kloue red en *ek* sal veilig wees, maar daar’s nog iemand anders van wie jy nie weet nie, wat dan in ’n groot moles sal beland. En ons wil hóm tog ook red, of hoe ? Natuur- lik. Nou goed. Dus gaan ons niks verklap nie.”

Met dié dat ek so met haar praat, het ek ’n baie goeie plan in die kop gekry wat my en Jim dalk kon help om van die skelms ontslae te raak deur hulle hier in die tronk te laat beland en dan pad te gee. Maar ek wou nie oordag met die vlot vaar sodat ’n ieder en ’n elk my met vrae kon kom bestook nie, dus moes die plan eers laterig die aand in werking tree.

„Juffrou Mary-Jane,” sê ek. „Ek sal jou sê wat ons doen—en dan hoef jy ook nie so lank by die Lothrops te bly nie. Hoe ver is dit soontoe ?”

„Net onder die vier myl. Dié kant toe, op die platteland.”

„Mooi. Nou sien dat jy daar kom en bly dan daar tot so nege-uur of halftien vanaand. Vra hulle dan om jou terug te bring huis toe— sê jy’t iets vergeet. As jy voor elfuur hier aankom, sit jy ’n kers hier in die venster; en as ek nie kom nie, dan wag jy *tot* elfuur. As ek *dán* nog nie hier is nie, kan jy weet ek het veilig weggekom. Dan kan jy uitgaan en die tyding gaan versprei en die twee skurke in die tronk kry.”

„Goed,” sê sy. „Ek sal so maak.”

„En as ek dit dalk nié regkry om weg te kom nie en ek word saam met hulle aangekeer, dan moet jy vir die mense sê dat ek jou alles vooraf vertel het en jy moet by my staan.”

„Natuurlik sal ek! Hulle sal nie ’n haartjie op jou kop aanraak nie!” sê sy en haar neusgate rek en haar oë blits toe sy dit sê.

„As ek dit regkry om weg te glip, sal ek natuurlik nie hier wees om te bewys dat die twee skurke nie jou ooms is nie. Ek kan dit nie eers bewys as ek hier *is* nie. Al wat ek sou kon doen, sou wees om te sê dat hulle boemelaars en leeglêers is—al sal dit dalk help. Daar’s ander wat veel beter sal vaar as ek—mense wat ook baie gouer geglo sal word as ek. Ek sal jou sê hoe jy hulle in die hande kan kry. Gee my ’n stukkie papier en ’n potlood. Kyk nou mooi: *Die Weergalose Majesteit, Bricksville*. Bêre dit en moenie dit verloor nie. As die hof iets omtrent die twee wil uitvind, laat hulle net iemand na Bricksville toe stuur om vir die mense te gaan vertel dat hulle die mans gevang het wat die *Weergalose Majesteit* opgevoer het, en vra hulle om ’n paar getuies te stuur. Jy sal daardie hele dorpie hier hê voor jy boe of ba kan sê, juffrou Mary. En hulle sal smoorkwaad wees boonop.”

Ek het geskat dat alles nou naasteby gereël was. Dus sê ek: „Laat die vendusie maar sy gang gaan. Moenie jou daaraan steur nie. Hulle het so kort kennisgewing gegee dat niemand vir enigiets hoef te betaal voor more nie, en hulle is beslis nie van plan om pad te gee voor hulle die geld gekry het nie. En soos die vendusie *nóú* gereël is, gaan dit ook waardeloos wees en hulle gaan niks geld eers *kry* nie. Dis nes dit met die slawe gegaan het: dit was g’n wettige transaksie nie en kort voor lank is die negers weer hier. Gits, hulle mag nog nie eers die geld vir die *negers* by die bank gaan haal nie. Hulle sit mooi in die sop, juffrou Mary.”

„Nou goed,” sê sy. „Ek gaan net gou ontbyt eet, dan ry ek dadelik na meneer Lothrop toe.”

„Nog nooit, juffrou Mary-Jane! Nog so nooit as te nimmer nie. Jy moet voór ontbyt gaan.”

„Hoekom?”

„Hoekom dink jy wil ek juis *hê* jy moet gaan?”

„Nee, ek weet nie. Ek . . . ek het nooit daaraan gedink nie. Hoekom?”

„Omdat jy nie iemand met ’n leergesig is nie. Mens kan jou gesig makliker lees as enige boek: jy kan dit lees soos drukskrif. Dink jy nou ooit jy sal kan gaan sit en eet en jou ooms kan groet as hulle jou hul móresoentjies kom gee sonder om . .

„Toe nou, dis genoeg! Goed, ek sal voor ontbyt gaan, met grágte. En moet my susters hier by hulle bly?”

„Ja. Moenie jou oor hulle bekommer nie. Hulle moet nog ’n rukkie uithou. Die skelms sal begin lont ruik as julle dalk al drie gaan. Ek wil nie hê jy moet hulle, of jou susters, of enigiemand anders hier in die dorp vandag sien nie. As ’n buurman jou vra hoe dit vanmóre met jou ooms gaan, sal jou gesig dadelik iets verklap. Nee, maak liewer dat jy dadelik wegkom, juffrou Mary-Jane en ek sal die saak hier met hulle regsien. Ek sal juffrou Susan vra om jou groete aan jou ooms oor te dra en te sê jy’s vir ’n paar uur weg om ’n bietjie rus of verandering te kry, of om ’n vriendin te gaan besoek; en jy sal veer vanaand of móreoggend terug wees.”

„Jy kan maar sê ek is na ’n vriendin toe. Maar ek gaan *nie* vir hulle groete stuur nie!”

„Nou goed, dan sal ek nie.” Daar was tog g’n kwaad in om vir háár so te sê nie. Dit was tog maar ’n kleinigheid en dis kleinigheidjies wat mens se moeilikhede hier op aarde uitstryk: dit sou Mary-Jane laat beter voel en dit sou my niks kos nie.

„Daar’s nog één ding,” sê ek dan. „Daardie sak geld.”

„Dié het hulle by hulle. Dit laat my skoon gek voel om te dink *hoe* hulle dit gekry het.”

„Nee, daar maak jy ’n fout. Hulle het dit nie.”

„Maar wie het dit dan?”

„Ek wens ek het dit geweet, maar ek weet nie. Ek het dit *gehad*, want ek het dit by hulle gesteel—ek het dit gesteel om vir jou te kom gee. En ek weet waar ek dit weggesteek het, maar ek is bevrees dis nie meer daar nie. Ek is bitter jammer, juffrou Mary-Jane, ek kan jou nie sê hoe jammer ek is nie. Maar ek het net my bes probeer doen, eerlikwaar. Ek is ampertjies betrap ook en toe moes ek dit in die eerste die beste plek indruk en maak dat ek wegkom—en dit was nie ’n goeie plek nie.”

„Ag, hou asseblief op om jouself die skuld te gee. Ek wil dit nie hoor nie. Dit was tog nie jou skuld nie, jy kon dit nie help nie. Waar het jy dit weggesteek?”

Ek wou nie he sy moes weer oor al haar probleme begin dink nie en ek kon dit buitendien nie oor my hart kry om haar iets te vertel wat haar in haar verbeelding daardie lyk met ’n sak geld op sy maag in die doodkis kan sien lê nie. Dus sê ek ’n minuut lank niks; en toe: „Ek wil jou liewers *nie* vertel waar ek dit gebêre het nie, juffrou Mary-Jane. Vergewe my tog maar, asseblief. Ek sal dit vir jou op ’n stukkie papier skryf, dan kan jy dit op pad na mnr. Lothrop toe lees as jy wil. Óink jy dit sal goed wees só?”

„O ja.”

Toe skryf ek: „Ek het dit in die doodkis gesit. Dit was daar toe jy in die nag daar gaan sit en huil het. Ek was agter die deur en ek het verskriklik jammer gevoel vir jou, juffrou Mary-Jane.”

Dit het my oë bietjie laat traan toe ek weer terugdink aan hoe sy daardie

nag so allenig sit en huil het terwyl daardie derduiwels onder haar dak gelê en slaap het, besig om haar te verneder en te besteel. En toe ek dit opvou en vir haar gee, sien ek hoe háár oë ook begin waterig raak. En sy druk my hand, sommer hârd, en sê „Tot siens. Ek gaan alles doen wat jy gesê het. En as ek jou dalk nie weer sien nie, sal ek jou in elk geval nooit vergeet nie, en ek sal baiemaal aan jou dink, en vir jou *bid* ook!” En toe’s sy weg.

Vir my bid! Ek skat as sy my gekén het, sou sy liewers ’n werk gesoek het wat sy makliker kan baasraak as dit. Maar ek is seker sy’t dit tóg gedoen—sy was daardie soort mens. Sy sou sowaar vir Judas gebid het as sy dit in haar kop gekry het. Ek glo nie iets sou háár gekeer het nie. Julie kan sê wat julle wil, maar ek dink sy’t meer pit in haar gehad as enige ander meisiekind wat ék nog gesien het. Sy was sommer vól pit. Dit klink na ’n vleiery, maar dit is g’n. En as mens van mooiheid begin praat—nou ja, dan trek sy Iosvoor. Ek het haar nooit weer gesien nadat sy dié more daar by die deur uit is nie, nooit weer nie, maar ek skat ek het miljoene der miljoene kere aan haar gedink en aan hoe sy gesê het dat sy vir my sou bid; en as ek ooit gedagte sou gekry het dat dit dalk sou help as ek vir háár bid, dan sweer ek ek sou dit gedoen het, buig of bars.

Nou ja, Mary-Jane is toe by die agterdeur uit, so meen ek, want niemand het haar sien gaan nie. Toe ek later vir Susan en die haaslip gewaar, het ek gévra:

„Wat is die naam van die mense oorkant die rivier by wie julle partymaal gaan kuier?”

„Daar’s ’n hele paar,” antwoord hulle. „Maar dis meestal by die Proctors.”

„Dis reg,” sê ek. „Ampertjies het ek die naam vergeet. Nou kyk, juffrou Mary-Jane het my gevra om vir julle te sê sy’s haastig soon- toe—een van hulle het glo siek geword.”

„Wie ?”

„Nee, ek weet nie. Ten minste, ek het vergeet, maar ek dink dis . .

„My goeiste, ek hoop tog nie dis *Hanna* nie!”

„Dit spyt my om dit te moet sê,” antwoord ek. „Maar dis juis Hanna.”

„Maar my hene, en laasweek was sy nog so gesond! Is dit ernstig?”

„Sommer baie ernstig. Hulle’t glo heelnag by haar gewaak, het juffrou Mary-Jane my gesê. Hulle glo nie sy sal nog baie ure lewe nie.”

„Nou toe nou. Maar wat makeer haar dan?”

Ek kon nie dadelik aan iets behoorliks dink nie, toe sê ek sommer: „Pampoentjies.”

„Pampoentjies se voet! Waar’t jy nou al gehoor dat mense gaan waak by iemand met pampoentjies ?”

„Dis wat jy dink. Met dié pampoentjies het hulle dit *tog* gedoen. Dis nie sommer ordinêre pampoentjies dié nie. Dis ’n nuwe soort, dis wat juffrou Mary-Jane gesê het.”

„Watse nuwe soort?”

„Daar's 'n klomp ander siektes daarby.”

„Watse ander siektes?”

„O, masels, en kinkhoes, en roos, en tering, en geelsug, en brein- koors en nog 'n hele spul ander.”

„Goeiste aarde! En dan noem hulle dit *pampoentjies*?”

„Dis wat juffrou Mary-Jane gesê het.”

„Maar vir wat op aarde noem hulle dit dan *pampoentjies*?” „Omdat dit *pampoentjies* is. Dis waarmee dit begin.”

„Dis somer verspot. Sê nou iemand stamp sy toon en hy drink dan gif en val in 'n put af en breek sy nek en val sy harsings uit, en iemand wil weet waarvan hy dood is—dink jy 'n pampoenkop sal kom sê dis omdat hy sy *toon* gestamp het ? Klink dit nie vir jou ook verspot nie? Natuurlik. Nou ja, die siekte is net so verspot. Is dit aansteeklik ?”

„Aansteeklik ? Vra jy nog? Jy kan netsowel vra of jy onder 'n eg kan uitloop as jy in die donker daarteen stamp. As één tand jou nie skep nie, dan kry 'n ander een jou beet. En as jy van daardie een tand af probeer loswikkel, dan sleep jy die hele eg met jou saam. Nou ja, jy kan sê dié soort *pampoentjies* is 'n soort van eg—en somer 'n bul van 'n eg daarby. Hy vang jou behóórlik vas.”

„Ek dink dis vreeslik,” sê die haaslip. „Ek gaan nou na oom Harvey toe en

..

„O ja, gaan gerus,” sê ek. „Loop voor die pad vol duwweltjies word.”

„En hoekom moet ek miskien nie?”

„Dink nou net 'n bietjie, dan verstaan jy dalk. Moes jou oom- hulle nie so vinnig as wat hulle kon van Engeland af hiernatoe kom nie? En dink jy hulle sal nou so gemeen wees om alleen terug te gaan en julle op jul eentjie laat agternakom? Jy weet mos hulle sal nie. Nou goed. Is jou oom Harvey 'n predikant of is hy nie? Nou ja, dink jy 'n predikant gaan vir 'n klerk op 'n stoomboot lieg? Dink jy hy gaan vir 'n klerk op 'n *skip* lieg?—net om juffrou Mary-Jane aan boord toe te laat? Jy weet mos hy sal nie. Wat dink jy sál hy doen? Hy sal sê: „Dis nou baie jammer, maar my kerksake sal maar net moet sien kom klaar. My niggie is blootgestel aan daardie gevaarlike pluribus-unum-pampoentjies, dus is dit my plig en roeping om drie maande lank hier te bly tot ons sien of sy dit gaan kry of nie.” Maar toe maar, as jy dink jy moet Hewers vir jou oom Harvey gaan vertel . . .”

„Goeiste, en dan hier bly rondlê om uit te vind of Mary-Jane dit het of nie, terwyl ons al die tyd die lewe in Engeland kan geniet? Jy's skoon mail”

„Nou goed. Maar miskien moet jy darem 'n paar van die bure vertel.”

„Hene, maar jy's onnosel. Verstaan jy nie dat hulle dan sal gaan klik nie? Nee, ons moet net eenvoudig stilbly en vir g'n dooie siel vertel nie.”

„Hm, dalk is jy reg. Ja, ek skat jy's tóg reg.”

„Maar ek dink ons moet darem vir oom Harvey vertel dat sy 'n rukkie weg is, anders voel hy dalk onrustig, of hoe?”

„Ja, dis wat Mary-Jane wou hê jy moet doen. Sy't gesê: „Sê vir hulle ek

stuur groete en soentjies vir oom Harvey en oom William en vertel vir hulle ek is net gou oor die rivier na meneer . . . meneer . . . wat is nou weer die naam van daardie ryk mense van wie jou oom Peter so baie gehou het? Die familie wat . . .”

„Jy bedoel die Aphthorps?”

„Natuurlik. Ek kan ook nooit g’n naam onthou nie—die meeste van die tyd in elk geval nie. Ja, sy’t gevra julle moet vir hulle sê sy’s oor na die Aphthorps toe om vir hulle te gaan sê om tog vir seker na die vendusie toe te kom en die huis te koop, want sy’t gereken haar oom Peter sou verkies dat hý dit kry; en sy gaan glo daar bly tot hulle besluit om te kom, en as sy nie te moeg is nie, sal sy dan terug- kom; anders kom sy moreoggend. Sy’t gesê julle moet tog niks van die Proctors sê nie, net van die Aphthorps—en dis in elk geval waar, want sy gáán met hulle praat oor die huis, dit het sy self vir my gesê.”

„Nou goed,” sê hulle en hulle gaan soek hulle ooms en dra die groete en die soentjies oor en gee vir hulle die boodskap.

Nou was alles in orde. Die meisiekinders sou niks uitlap nie, omdat hulle Engeland toe wou gaan; en die koning en die hertog sou dit verkies dat Mary-Jane buite bereik is, besig om die vendusie- besigheid aan te help, eerder as dat sy dalk in dr. Robinson se hande beland. Ek het sommer hoogs in my skik gevoel: ek dink ek het ’n goeie stukkie werk daarvan gemaak—seifs Tom Sawyer sou nie daarop kon verbeter nie. Hy sou dit natuurlik met veel meer *styl* gedoen het as ek, maar daarmee is ek nie juis goed nie, want ek is nie so grootgemaak nie.

In die namiddag is die vendusie toe op die dorpsplein gehou, en dit het net eenvoudig aangehou en aangehou. Die oubaas was daar voor by die afslaer, op sy blinkste uitgevat, en elke kort-kort het hy die man in die rede geval met ’n Bybelteksie of ’n floeferige ou geseg- detjie, en die hertog het gegoe-goe vir die vales om meegevoel op te wek.

Maar uiteindelik was die gedoente verby en alles was verkoop. Dis te sê, alles behalwe ’n nikswerd stukkie grond in die kerkhof. En toe’s hulle sóóntoe—want ek het nog nooit die koning se gelyke gesien as dit by inpalm kom nie: hy wou net eenvoudig *alles* he. Nou ja, hulle was nog besig daarmee toe ’n stoomboot kom land, en ’n paar minute later kom daar ’n klomp mense skreeuend en roepend en laggend nader.

„Haai!” skree hulle. „Hier’s vir julle ’n paar teëstanders! Nou’s hier *twee* pare erfgename van ou Peter Wilks—kom betaal julle geld en kies maar self wie julle wil hê!”

SECTION 29

They was fetching a very nice looking old gentleman along, and a nice looking younger one, with his right arm in a sling. And my souls, how the people yelled, and laughed, and kept it up. But I didn't see no joke about it, and I judged it would strain the duke and the king some to see any. I reckoned they'd turn pale. But no, nary a pale did *they* turn. The duke he never let on he suspicioned what was up, but just went a goo-gooing around, happy and satisfied, like a jug that's googling out buttermilk; and as for the king, he just gazed and gazed down sorrowful on them new-comers like it give him the stomach-ache in his very heart to think there could be such frauds and rascals in the world. Oh, he done it admirable. Lots of the principal people gathered around the king, to let him see they was on his side. That old gentleman that had just come looked all puzzled to death. Pretty soon he begun to speak, and I see, straight off, he pronounced *like* an Englishman, not the king's way, though the king's *was* pretty good, for an imitation. I can't give the old gent's words, nor I can't imitate him; but he turned around to the crowd, and says, about like this:

"This is a surprise to me which I wasn't looking for; and I'll acknowledge, candid and frank, I ain't very well fixed to meet it and answer it; for my brother and me has had misfortunes, he's broke his arm, and our baggage got put off at a town above here, last night in the night by a mistake. I am Peter Wilks's brother Harvey, and this is his brother William, which can't hear nor speak—and can't even make signs to amount

to much, now 't he's only got one hand to work them with. We are who we say we are; and in a day or two, when I get the baggage, I can prove it. But, up till then, I won't say nothing more, but go to the hotel and wait."

So him and the new dummy started off; and the king he laughs, and blethers out:

"Broke his arm—very likely *ain't* it?—and very convenient, too, for a fraud that's got to make signs, and hain't learnt how. Lost their baggage! That's *mighty* good!—and mighty ingenious—under the *circumstances!*"

So he laughed again; and so did everybody else, except three or four, or maybe half a dozen. One of these was that doctor; another one was a sharp looking gentleman, with a carpet-bag of the old-fashioned kind made out of carpet-stuff, that had just come off of the steamboat and was talking to him in a low voice, and glancing towards the king now and then and nodding their heads—it was Levi Bell, the lawyer that was gone up to Louisville; and another one was a big rough husky that come along and listened to all the old gentleman said, and was listening to the king now. And when the king got done, this husky up and says:

"Say, looky here; if you are Harvey Wilks, when'd you come to this town?"

"The day before the funeral, friend," says the king.

"But what time o' day?"

"In the evenin'—'bout an hour er two before sundown."

“How’d you come?”

“I come down on the *Susan Powell*, from Cincinnati.”

“Well, then, how’d you come to be up at the Pint in the mornin’—in a canoe?”

“I warn’t up at the Pint in the mornin’.”

“It’s a lie.”

Several of them jumped for him and begged him not to talk that way to an old man and a preacher.

“Preacher be hanged, he’s a fraud and a liar. He was up at the Pint that mornin’. I live up there, don’t I? Well, I was up there, and he was up there. I see him there. He come in a canoe, along with Tim Collins and a boy.”

The doctor he up and says:

“Would you know the boy again if you was to see him, Hines?”

“I reckon I would, but I don’t know. Why, yonder he is, now. I know him perfectly easy.”

It was me he pointed at. The doctor says:

“Neighbors, I don’t know whether the new couple is frauds or not; but if *these* two ain’t frauds, I am an idiot, that’s all. I think it’s our duty to see that they don’t get away from here till we’ve looked into this thing. Come along, Hines; come along, the rest of you. We’ll take these fellows to the tavern and affront them with t’other couple, and I reckon we’ll find out *something* before we

get through.”

It was nuts for the crowd, though maybe not for the king’s friends; so we all started. It was about sundown. The doctor he led me along by the hand, and was plenty kind enough, but he never let go my hand.

We all got in a big room in the hotel, and lit up some candles, and fetched in the new couple. First, the doctor says:

“I don’t wish to be too hard on these two men, but I think they’re frauds, and they may have complices that we don’t know nothing about. If they have, won’t the complices get away with that bag of gold Peter Wilks left? It ain’t unlikely. If these men ain’t frauds, they won’t object to sending for that money and letting us keep it till they prove they’re all right—ain’t that so?”

Everybody agreed to that. So I judged they had our gang in a pretty tight place, right at the outstart. But the king he only looked sorrowful, and says:

“Gentlemen, I wish the money was there, for I ain’t got no disposition to throw anything in the way of a fair, open, out-and-out investigation o’ this miserable business; but alas, the money ain’t there; you k’n send and see, if you want to.”

“Where is it, then?”

“Well, when my niece give it to me to keep for her, I took and hid it inside o’ the straw tick o’ my bed, not wishin’ to bank it for the few days we’d be here, and considerin’ the bed a safe place, we not bein’ used to niggers, and suppos’n’ ’em honest, like servants in

England. The niggers stole it the very next mornin' after I had went down stairs; and when I sold 'em, I hadn't missed the money yit, so they got clean away with it. My servant here k'n tell you 'bout it gentlemen."

The doctor and several said "Shucks!" and I see nobody didn't altogether believe him. One man asked me if I see the niggers steal it. I said no, but I see them sneaking out of the room and hustling away, and I never thought nothing, only I reckoned they was afraid they had waked up my master and was trying to get away before he made trouble with them. That was all they asked me. Then the doctor whirls on me and says:

"Are *you* English too?"

I say yes; and him and some others laughed, and said, "Stuff!"

Well, then they sailed in on the general investigation, and there we had it, up and down, hour in, hour out, and nobody never said a word about supper, nor ever seemed to think about it—and so they kept it up, and kept it up; and it *was* the worst mixed-up thing you ever see. They made the king tell his yarn, and they made the old gentleman tell his'n; and anybody but a lot of prejudiced chuckleheads would a *seen* that the old gentleman was spinning truth and t'other one lies. And by-and-by they had me up to tell what I knowed. The king he give me a left-handed look out of the corner of his eye, and so I knowed enough to talk on the right side. I begun to tell about Sheffield, and how we lived there, and all about the English Wilkses, and so on; but I didn't get pretty fur till the doctor begun to

laugh; and Levi Bell, the lawyer, says:

“Set down, my boy, I wouldn’t strain myself, if I was you. I reckon you ain’t used to lying, it don’t seem to come handy; what you want is practice. You do it pretty awkward.”

I didn’t care nothing for the compliment, but I was glad to be let off, anyway.

The doctor he started to say something, and turns and says:

“If you’d been in town at first, Levi Bell——”

The king broke in and reached out his hand, and says:

“Why, is this my poor dead brother’s old friend that he’s wrote so often about?”

The lawyer and him shook hands, and the lawyer smiled and looked pleased, and they talked right along a while, and then got to one side and talked low; and at last the lawyer speaks up and says:

“That’ll fix it. I’ll take the order and send it, along with your brother’s, and then they’ll know it’s all right.”

So they got some paper and a pen, and the king he set down and twisted his head to one side, and chewed his tongue, and scrawled off something; and then they give the pen to the duke—and then for the first time, the duke looked sick. But he took the pen and wrote. So then the lawyer turns to the new old gentleman and says:

“You and your brother please write a line or two and

sign your names.”

The old gentleman wrote, but nobody couldn't read it. The lawyer looked powerful astonished, and says:

“Well, it beats *me*”—and snaked a lot of old letters out of his pocket, and examined them, and then examined the old man's writing, and then *them* again; and then says: “These old letters is from Harvey Wilks; and here's *these* two's handwritings, and anybody can see *they* didn't write them” (the king and the duke looked sold and foolish, I tell you, to see how the lawyer had took them in), “and here's *this* old gentleman's handwriting, and anybody can tell, easy enough, *he* didn't write them—fact is, the scratches he makes ain't properly *writing*, at all. Now here's some letters from _____”

The new old gentleman says:

“If you please, let me explain. Nobody can read my hand but my brother there—so he copies for me. It's *his* hand you've got there, not mine.”

“*Well!*” says the lawyer, “this *is* a state of things. I've got some of William's letters too; so if you'll get him to write a line or so we can com——”

“He *can't* write with his left hand,” says the old gentleman. “If he could use his right hand, you would see that he wrote his own letters and mine too. Look at both, please—they're by the same hand.”

The lawyer done it, and says:

“I believe it's so—and if it ain't so, there's a heap

stronger resemblance than I'd noticed before, anyway. Well, well, well! I thought we was right on the track of a slution, but it's gone to grass, partly. But anyway, *one* thing is proved—*these* two ain't either of 'em Wilkses"—and he wagged his head towards the king and the duke.

Well, what do you think?—that muleheaded old fool wouldn't give in *then*! Indeed he wouldn't. Said it warn't no fair test. Said his brother William was the cussedest joker in the world, and hadn't *tried* to write—he see William was going to play one of his jokes the minute he put the pen to paper. And so he warmed up and went warbling and warbling right along, till he was actuly beginning to believe what he was saying, *himself*—but pretty soon the new old gentleman broke in, and says:

"I've thought of something. Is there anybody here that helped to lay out my br—helped to lay out the late Peter Wilks for burying?"

"Yes," says somebody, "me and Ab Turner done it. We're both here."

Then the old man turns towards the king, and says:

"Peraps this gentleman can tell me what was tatooed on his breast?"

Blamed if the king didn't have to brace up mighty quick, or he'd a squshed down like a bluff bank that the river has cut under, it took him so sudden—and mind you, it was a thing that was calculated to make most *anybody* squish to get fetched such a solid one as that without any notice—because how was *he* going to

know what was tatoored on the man? He whitened a little; he couldn't help it; and it was mighty still in there, and everybody bending a little forwards and gazing at him. Says I to myself, *Now* he'll throw up the sponge—there ain't no more use. Well, did he? A body can't hardly believe it, but he didn't. I reckon he thought he'd keep the thing up till he tired them people out, so they'd thin out, and him and the duke could break loose and get away. Anyway, he set there, and pretty soon he begun to smile, and says:

"Mf! It's a *very* tough question, *ain't* it! Yes, sir, I k'n tell you what's tatoored on his breast. It's jest a small, thin, blue arrow—that's what it is; and if you don't look clost, you can't see it. *Now* what do you say—hey?"

Well, *I* never see anything like that old blister for clean out-and-out cheek.

The new old gentleman turns brisk towards Ab Turner and his pard, and his eye lights up like he judged he'd got the king *this* time, and says:

"There—you've heard what he said! Was there any such mark on Peter Wilks's breast?"

Both of them spoke up and says:

"We didn't see no such mark."

"Good!" says the old gentleman. "Now, what you *did* see on his breast was a small dim P, and a B (which is an initial he dropped when he was young), and a W, with dashes between them, so: P—B—W"—and he marked them that way on a piece of paper. "Come—ain't that what you saw?"

Both of them spoke up again, and says:

“No, we *didn't*. We never seen any marks at all.”

Well, everybody *was* in a state of mind, now; and they sings out:

“The whole *bilin'* of 'm 's frauds! Le's duck 'em! le's drown 'em! le's ride 'em on a rail!” and everybody was whooping at once, and there was a rattling pow-wow. But the lawyer he jumps on the table and yells, and says:

“Gentlemen—*gentlemen!* Hear me just a word—just a *single* word—if you PLEASE! There's one way yet—let's go and dig up the corpse and look.”

That took them.

“Hooray!” they all shouted, and was starting right off; but the lawyer and the doctor sung out:

“Hold on, hold on! Collar all these four men and the boy, and fetch *them* along, too!”

“We'll do it!” they all shouted: “and if we don't find them marks we'll lynch the whole gang!”

I *was* scared, now, I tell you. But there warn't no getting away, you know. They gripped us all, and marched us right along, straight for the graveyard, which was a mile and a half down the river, and the whole town at our heels, for we made noise enough, and it was only nine in the evening.

As we went by our house I wished I hadn't sent Mary Jane out of town; because now if I could tip her the

wink, she'd light out and save me, and blow on our dead-beats.

Well, we swarmed along down the river road, just carrying on like wild-cats; and to make it more scary, the sky was darkening up, and the lightning beginning to wink and flutter, and the wind to shiver amongst the leaves. This was the most awful trouble and most dangersome I ever was in; and I was kinder stunned; everything was going so different from what I had allowed for; stead of being fixed so I could take my own time, if I wanted to, and see all the fun, and have Mary Jane at my back to save me and set me free when the close-fit come, here was nothing in the world betwixt me and sudden death but just them tatoo-marks. If they didn't find them—

I couldn't bear to think about it; and yet, somehow, I couldn't think about nothing else. It got darker and darker, and it was a beautiful time to give the crowd the slip; but that big husky had me by the wrist—Hines—and a body might as well try to give Goliath^{e1} the slip. He dragged me right along, he was so excited; and I had to run to keep up.

When they got there they swarmed into the graveyard and washed over it like an overflow. And when they got to the grave, they found they had about a hundred times as many shovels as they wanted, but nobody hadn't thought to fetch a lantern. But they sailed into digging, anyway, by the flicker of the lightning, and sent a man to the nearest house a half a mile off, to borrow one.

So they dug and dug, like everything; and it got awful

dark, and the rain started, and the wind swished and swushed along, and the lightning come brisker and brisker, and the thunder boomed; but them people never took no notice of it, they was so full of this business; and one minute you could see everything and every face in that big crowd, and the shovelfuls of dirt sailing up out of the grave, and the next second the dark wiped it all out, and you couldn't see nothing at all.

At last they got out the coffin, and begun to unscrew the lid, and then such another crowding, and shouldering, and shoving as there was, to scrouge in and get a sight, you never see; and in the dark, that way, it was awful. Hines he hurt my wrist dreadful, pulling and tugging so, and I reckon he clean forgot I was in the world, he was so excited and panting.

All of a sudden the lightning let go a perfect sluice of white glare, and somebody sings out:

“By the living jingo, here's the bag of gold on his breast!”

Hines let out a whoop, like everybody else, and dropped my wrist and give a big surge to bust his way in and get a look, and the way I lit out and shinned for the road in the dark, there ain't nobody can tell.

I had the road all to myself, and I fairly flew—leastways I had it all to myself except the solid dark, and the now-and-then glares, and the buzzing of the rain, and the thrashing of the wind, and the splitting of the thunder; and sure as you are born I did clip it along!

When I struck the town, I see there warn't nobody out

in the storm, so I never hunted for no back streets, but humped it straight through the main one; and when I begun to get towards our house I aimed my eye and set it. No light there; the house all dark—which made me feel sorry and disappointed, I didn't know why. But at last, just as I was sailing by, *flash* comes the light in Mary Jane's window! and my heart swelled up sudden, like to bust; and the same second the house and all was behind me in the dark, and wasn't ever going to be before me no more in this world. She *was* the best girl I ever see, and had the most sand.

The minute I was far enough above the town to see I could make the towhead, I begun to look sharp for a boat to borrow; and the first time the lightning showed me one that wasn't chained, I snatched it and shoved. It was a canoe, and warn't fastened with nothing but a rope. The towhead was a rattling big distance off, away out there in the middle of the river, but I didn't lose no time; and when I struck the raft at last, I was so fagged I would a just laid down to blow and gasp if I could afforded it. But I didn't. As I sprung aboard I sung out:

"Out with you Jim, and set her loose! Glory be to goodness, we're shut of them!"

Jim lit out, and was a coming for me with both arms spread, he was so full of joy; but when I glimpsed him in the lightning, my heart shot up in my mouth, and I went overboard backwards; for I forgot he was old King Lear and a drowned A-rab all in one, and it most scared the livers and lights out of me. But Jim fished me out, and was going to hug me and bless me, and so on, he was so glad I was back and we was shut of

the king and the duke, but I says:

“Not now—have it for breakfast, have it for breakfast!
Cut loose and let her slide!”

So, in two seconds, away we went, a sliding down the river, and it *did* seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river and nobody to bother us. I had to skip around a bit, and jump up and crack my heels a few times, I couldn't help it; but about the third crack, I noticed a sound that I knowed mighty well—and held my breath and listened and waited—and sure enough, when the next flash busted out over the water, here they come!—and just a laying to their oars and making their skiff hum! It was the king and the duke.

So I wilted right down onto the planks, then, and give up; and it was all I could do to keep from crying.

Chapter 29

By hulle was daar 'n baie gawe oubaas en ook 'n gawe jonger man wie se arm in 'n verband toegewikkel was. En hét die mense vir jou geskree en gelag en te kere gegaan! Maar ék het g'n grap in die hele affêre gesien nie, en ek skat dit sou vir die koning en die hertog ook maar swaar gegaan het om een te sien. Ek het verwag dat hulle doodsbleek sou word. Maar nog nooit. Die hertog het niemand laat agterkom dat hy enige benul het van wat daar aangaan nie: hy't een stryk deur doodgelukkig en tevrede bly goe-goe, soos 'n beker waaruit daar karringmelk geskink word; en die koning het net treurig in die rigting van die nuwe aan- komelinge gestaar asof dit hom maagpyn op die hart gee om te dink dat daar sulke skelms en skurke op-die wêreld kan wees. Hy't dit nou rêrig eersteklas gedoen. 'n Hele klomp van die dorp se voorste mense het om hom saamgedrom om te wys dat hulle aan sy kant is. Die oubaas wat so-ewe opgedaag het, was eenvoudig morsdood verstom. Toe hy begin praat, kon ek sommer dadelik hoor dat hy *rêrig* nes 'n Engelsman praat—g'n na-apery soos die koning se manier van praat nie, hoe goed die ook al geklink het. Ek kan nie die oubaas se woorde

weergee of dit seifs probeer namaak nie. Maar hy't in elk geval om- gedraai na die skare en iets van dié aard gesê:

„Dis vir my 'n verrassing wat ek nie te wagte was nie. En ek sal maar dadelik ronduit erken dat ek nie juis in staat is om iets daarteen te bewys nie; want ek en my broer het teenspoed gehad. Hy't sy arm gebreek en ons bagasie is laasnag in die donker per ongeluk by die vorige dorp afgelaai. Ek is Peter Wilks se broer Harvey, en dis sy doofstom broer William—hy kan nou nie eens behoorlike gebare maak nie omdat hy net een hand kan gebruik. Ons is die mense wat ons sê dat ons is; en sodra ons bagasie oor 'n dag of wat opdaag, sal ek dit kan bewys. Tot tyd en wyl dit gebeur, sal ek liewers niks verder sê nie, maar in die hotel gaan oorbly.”

En toe maak hy en die nuwe doofstomme aanstalte. Die koning begin lag en hy spot:

„Sy arm gebreek, nê? Dit lyk so! Danig gerieflik ook vir 'n skelm wat moet gebare maak en nie weet hóé nie. Hulle bagasie verloor? Pragtig! En baie slim ook—onder die *omstandighede*.”

Toe lag hy weer; en almal lag saam met horn, behalwe so 'n twee of drie van die mense—of dalkies 'n halfdosyn. Een van dié was die dokter; verder was daar 'n man met 'n slim gesig en 'n outydse soort tas van tapytmateriaal: hy't so-ewe met die stoomboot aangekom en was nou saggies met die dokter aan die gesels. Kort-kort loer hulle na die koning en knik hulle koppe. Dit was Levi Bell, die prokureur wat weg was na Louisville. Dan was daar nog 'n groot, ruwe fris man wat kom luister het na alles wat die oubaas te sê gehad het en nou weer besig was om na die koning te luister. En toe die koning klaar is, sê hy:

„Luister: as jy Harvey Wilks is—wan nee r het jy hier aangekom?” „Die dag voor die begrafnis, vriend,” antwoord die koning. „Omtrent hoe laat?”

„Teen die aand. So 'n uur of twee voor sononder.”

„En *hoe* het jy gekom?”

„Met die *Susan Powell* van Cincinnati af.”

„Nou kan jy dan vir my sê hoe't dit gebeur dat jy die einste more in 'n *kano* daar bo by die Punt was?”

„Ek was nié die oggend daar by die Punt nie.”

„Jy lieg.”

'n Hele paar van die mense storm nader en smeeke hom om tog nie so te praat met 'n ou man en 'n predikant nie.

„Predikant se voet, hy's 'n skurk en 'n leuenaar. Hy was daardie oggend bo by die Punt. Dink julle miskien ek wóón nie daar nie? Wel, ek was daar—en liý was daar. Ek het hom *gesien*. Hy't in 'n *kano* daar aangekom, saam met Tim Collins en 'n seun.”

Vinnig vra die dokter: „Sal jy die seun herken as jy hom weer sien, Hines?”

„Ek skat so, maar ek is nie seker nie. Maar dáár staan hy mos! Dis doodmaklik om hom uit te ken.” Hy staan na my en beduie.

Toe sê die dokter: „Bure, ek weet nie of die nuwe mense skelms is of nie, maar as die twee nie skelms is nie, is ek ’n swaap. Ek dink dis ons plig om toe te sien dat hulle nie hier wegkom voor ons die saak ondersoek het nie. Kom saam met my, Hines. Kom julle ander ook. Ons gaan die twee na die hotel toe neem en hulle by die ander paar bring; *iets* sal ons wel uitvind voor die ontmoeting verby is.”

Die skare was dadelik geesdriftig—maar die koning en die hertog waarskynlik nie. Ons is toe almal saam daar weg. Dit was net omtrent sononder. Die dokter het my hand gevat en my met hom laat saam- stap; hy was doodvriendelik, maar hy’t nie my hand ’n oomblik laat *los* nie.

Ons het almal in ’n groot vertrek in die hotel saamgedrom, kerse aangesteek en toe die twee nuwe aankomelinge laat roep.

Toe begin die dokter: „Ek wil nie te kwaai werk met dié twee nie,” sê hy, „maar ek dink hulle is skelms en dalk het hulle helper's van wie ons niks weet nie. As dit so is, is dit heel moontlik dat die helpers sal probeer wegkom met daardie sak goud wat Peter Wilks nagelaat het, nie waar nie? Nou, as dié twee nie skelms is nie, sal hulle seker nie omgee om die geld te laat haal en ons toe te laat om dit te bêre tot hulle kan bewys dat hulle reg is nie, of hoe?”

Daarmee stem almal saam. Dit wil dus lyk of ons klompie somer uit die staanspoor in ’n noute sit. Maar die koning lyk net so bietjie treurig, en hy sê: „Menere, ek wens die geld was nog daar, want ek wil regtig g’n struikelblokke plaas in die weg van ’n oop, eerlike ondersoek na dié hele ellendige affêre nie. Maar die geld is helaas nie meer daar nie. Julle kan maar gaan kyk as julle wil.”

„Nou waar is dit dan?”

„Wel, my niggie het dit mos vir my gegee om te bêre, en ek het dit binnekant die strooimatrass op my bed weggesteek omdat dit nie die moeite werd was om dit vir dié paar dae te bank nie; ek het gereken die bed is ’n veilige plek, want ons is nie gewoond aan negers nie en ons het gereken hulle sal net so betroubaar wees as bediendes in Engeland. En toe steel die slawe dit sowaar net die volgende more ná ek uit die kamer uit is. Toe ek hulle verkoop het, het ek nog nie ge- weet die geld is weg nie, dus het hulle daarmee weggekom. My bediende hier kan julle alles daarvan vertel, menere.”

„Magtig!” sê die dokter en ’n hele paar ander mense, en ek kon sien daar’s niemand wat hom heeltemal glo nie. Een man het my gevra of ek gesien het dat die negers die geld steel. Nee, het ek geantwoord, ek het net gesien hoe hulle uit die kamer uitgesluip kom en hulle uit die voete maak, en dit het my laat dink dat hulle my baas wakker gemaak het en nou probeer wegkom het voor hy die wêreld vir hulle warm maak. Dit was al wat hulle van my wou weet.

Toe swaai die dokter om na my toe en vra: „Is jy ook Engels?” „Ja,” antwoord ek. Dit het hom en ’n paar van die ander laat uit- bars van die lag. „Twak,” het hulle kortaf gesê.

Nou ja, en toe begin daar ’n algemene ondersoek en ons word gepeper:

links en regs, uur na uur, en niemand sê 'n woord van aand- ete nie—niemand *dink* skynbaar eers daaraan nie—maar hou net eenvoudig aan en aan. Dit was die grootste gemors wat ek nog ooit gesien het. Hulle het die koning gevra om sy storie te vertel, en daar- na moes die oubaas syne vertel, en tensy mens 'n bevooroordeelde pampoenkop was, moes jy sommer kon *sien* dat die oubaas die waar- heid praat en dat die koning 'n spul leuens vertel. Eindelik keer hulle my toe ook aan om te vertel wat ek weet. Die koning begluur my so uit die hoek van sy oog, sodat ek dadelik sorg dat ek die storie van die regte kant af vertel. Ek het alles omtrent Sheffield begin vertel, en oor hoe ons daar gewoon het, en oor die Wilkse in Engeland ensovoorts; maar voor ek nog mooi op stryk kon kom, begin die dokter te lag en Levi Bell, die prokureur, sê:

„Sit maar weer, boet. Ek sou my nie so ooreis as ek jy is nie. Ek skat jy's nie daaraan gewoond om leuens te vertel nie—dit sukkel te veel; jy't meer oefening nodig.”

Dié kompliment was glad nie na my smaak nie, maar ek was darem bly om met rus gelaat te word.

Die dokter wil net begin om iets te sê; toe draai hy weer om en sê: „As jy heel aan die begin hier was, Levi Bell. . .”

Dadelik val die koning hom in die rede. Hy steek sy hand uit en sê: „Wat? Is dit die goeie on vriend van wie my arme oorlede broer so dikwels geskrywe het?”

Hy en die prokureur begin bladsteek, en die prokureur staan en glimlag en lyk hoogs in sy skik, en hulle gesels 'n hele ruk met me-kaar; naderhand loop hulle eenkant toe en begin saggies praat. En eindelik sê die prokureur hardop:

„Goed. Ek sal die bestelling afneem en dit saam met jou broer s'n wegstuur, en dan sal hulle weet dis alles in orde.”

Toe word daar papier en 'n pen gehaal, en die koning buig sy kop skuins na die een kant toe en sit en kou aan sy tong en skrabbel toe iets; daarna gee hulle die pen vir die hertog—en vir die heel eerste keer begin hy bietjie vaal om die kiewe lyk. Maar hy vat tog die pen en skryf. Daarna draai die prokureur na die nuwe oubaas en sê: „Sal jy en jou broer asseblief elk 'n paar reëltjies skryf en julle name daaronder teken?”

Die oubaas skryf iets, maar niemand kan dit lees nie. Stomverbaas kyk die prokureur daarna en sê:

„Dis bokant my vuurmaakplek . . . !” En hy haal 'n klomp ou briewe uit sy sak uit en beskou hulle goed, en beskou toe weer die oubaas se handskrif, en toe weer die briewe; en eindelik sê hy: „Dié ou briewe is van Harvey Wilks. En hier het julle die twee se hand- skrifte: enigiemand kan sien hulle het dit nie geskrywe nie.” (Toe moes jy sien hoe skaapagtig lyk die koning en die hertog oor die prokureur hulle so netjies vasgetrek het!) „En hier's dié oubaas se handskrif—en dis net so duidelik dat hý die briewe nie geskryf het nie. Om die waarheid te sê, hy krap sommer op die papier—dis g'n skrywery nie. En hier is nou 'n paar briewe van . . .”

„Gee my asseblief kans om te verduidelik,” sê die nuwe oubaas. „My broer is die enigste mens wat my handskrif kan lees. Daarom skryf hy gewoonlik my briewe vir my. Dis sý handskrif wat julle daar in die briewe het, nie myne nie.”

„Nou toe nou!” sê die prokureur. „Dis nou vir jou ’n ding! Ek het ’n paar van William se briewe ook hier. As jy hom dus sal vra om ’n paar reëls te skrywe, dan kan ons . . .”

„Maar hy kan nie met sy linkerhand skryf nie,” sê die oubaas. „As hy sy regterhand kon gebruik, sou julle kon sien dat hy sowel my briewe as syne geskryf het. Kyk gerus na die briewe—hulle is deur een en dieselfde mens geskryf.”

Die prokureur maak so, en antwoord dan: „Dit lyk nogal so, ja. En as dit dalk nie so is nie, dan is daar in elk geval ’n veel sterker ooreenkoms as wat ek tevore opgemerk het. Nou toe nou! Ek het

net gedink ons gaan die saak nou oplos, en nou’s ons tog nie veel verder nie—ten dele wel, in elk geval. Maar één ding het ons ten minste bewys. G’neen van die twee is ’n Wilks nie”—en hy beduie na die koning en die hertog.

En wat dink julle gebeur toe? Daardie ou hardekop weier een- voudig om toe te gee. Hy *weier* net. Hy hou vol dis g’n regverdige toets nie. Sy broer William, sê hy, is die grootste grapmaker op aarde, en hy’t nooit eers *probeer* skryf nie. Hy kon *sien* William het weer ’n poets in sy kop die oomblik toe hy die pen oplig. En hoe meer hy praat, hoe gladder raak sy mond en hy babbel land en sand aanme- kaar totdat hy naderhand sêlf begin glo wat hy sê. Maar na ’n ruk val die nuwe oubaas horn in die rede en sê skielik:

„Ek het nou net aan iets gedink. Het enigiemand van julle mense hier gehelp om my br . . . om wyle Peter Wilks uit te lê vir sy be- grafnis ?”

„Ja,” gee iemand antwoord. „Ek en Ab Turner het horn uitgelê. Ons is altwee hier.”

Toe draai die oubaas na die koning toe en hy vra: „Miskien sal dié meneer my kan sê wat daar op sy bors getattoeër was ?”

Toe moes die koning darem baie vinnig sy varkies bymekaar kry, anders het sy saak net daar in duie gestort soos ’n steil rivierwal wat uitgekalwer is deur die water. En, gits, dit was ’n gedoente wat erg genoeg was om enige mens plat te slaan as dit so onverwags op hom afkom: hoe moes *hy* weet wat daar op die man se bors getattoeër was? Hy’t so bietjie bleek geword—hoe kon hy anders?—en skielik was dit doodstil daar binnekant terwyl almal effens vooroorleun om hom aan te gaap. *Nou* gaan hy die handdoek ingooi, dag ek by myself: hier is daar nie uitkomkans nie. Maar dink julle nou hy hét? Dis amper onmoontlik om dit te glo, maar hy het nie. Ek skat hy was van plan om vol te hou tot die mense begin moeg word en die skare uitgedun raak sodat hy en die hertog hulle kans kan waar- neem en weghardloop. Hoe dit ook al sy, hy sit toe daar en na ’n rukkie begin hy glimlag en hy antwoord:

„Gmf! Dink jy nou dis ’n *moeilike* vraag? Natuurlik kan ek vir jou sê wat daar op sy bors getattoeër was. Dis ’n klein, smal blou pyltjie, dis wat dit is.

En as mens nie móóí gckyk het nie, dan't jy dit nie eers raakgesien nie. Nou toe? Wat sê jy daarop, he?"

Dié ou skurk se vermetelheid het sowaar nog nooit sy moses teëgekom nie.

Die nuwe oubaas draai vinnig terug na Ab Turner en sy maat toe en daar's lig in sy oë asof hy oortuig is daarvan dat hy die koning dié slag behoorlik vasgetrek het. „Nou toe?" sê hy. „Julle't gehoor wat hy gesê het. Het julle so iets op Peter Wilks se bors gewaar?" Dadelik antwoord hulle: „Nee, so 'n merk het ons nie gesien nie.” „Mooi,” sê die oubaas. „Nou sal ek vir julle sê wat julle wél op sy bors gesien het. Daar was 'n klein, dowwerige P, en 'n B ('n voor- letter wat hy vroeg in sy lewe al laat vaar het), en 'n W, met strepies tussen die letters. So: P-B-W.” Hy wys dit vir hulle op 'n stukkie papier. „Is dit nou nie wat julle gesien het nie?"

Dadelik antwoord die twee: „Nee. Ons het g'n enkele merk aan hom gesien nie.”

Tóé's daar darem vir jou 'n deurmekaarspul in die kamer! Hulle roep: „Hulle is skelms, die hele spul van hulle! Gooi hulle in die water! Versuipt hulle! Hang hulle op!” En almal begin tegelyk skree dat hoor en sien vergaan.

Maar die prokureur spring vinnig op die tafel en roep: „Menere, *menere*! Luister na my, net 'n oomblikkie, *asseblief*! Daar's nog een uitweg: kom ons gaan grawe die lyk op en *kyk*!”

Dit was so in hulle kraal. „Hoerê!” skree hulle. En hulle wil ook sommer dadelik aanstalte maak, maar die dokter roep hulle terug: „Wag eers! Wag! Van hierdie vier mans en die seun en neem hulle saam!”

„Ons sal!” dreun hulle. „En as ons nie daardie merke kry nie, dan hang ons die hele gebroedsel op!”

Ek gee nie om om dit reguit te sê nie: ek was *bang*. Maar weggom- kans was daar nie. Hulle't ons vasgegryp en reguit begraaftplaas toe gestap met ons. Dié was so een en 'n half myl stroomaf. Die hele dorp het agternagekom, aangelok deur die lawaai, want dit was mos nog maar nege-uur die aand.

Toe ons daar by óns huis verbykom, het ek gewens dat ek liewers nie vir Mary-Jane uit die dorp uitgestuur het nie, want as ek haar nou net in die hande kon kry om haar te vertel wat gaande is, sou sy my dadelik kom help het; en dan het die skurke ook sommer aan die pen gery.

Al langs die rivier af het ons gedruis, nes 'n spul wildekatte. En om dit alles méér vreesaanjaend te maak, was die lug besig om toe te trek en weerlig het begin dans en flikker, en die wind het tussen die blare gebibber. Dit was die ergste en gevaarlikste moles waar ek nog ooit in beland het, en ek was skoon deur die wind geskrik. Alles het anders verloop as wat ek gereken het. In plaas daarvan dat ek op my tyd die hele gedoente kon dophou, met Mary-Jane byderhand om my op vrye voet te stel wanneer die groot moles kom, was daar nou skielik niks in die wye wêreld tussen my en 'n skielike dood nie— niks behalwe daardie tattoeëermerke nie. As hulle dié goed nie kry nie . . .

Ek kon net nie daaraan dink nie; en tog kon ek ook aan niks anders dink

nie. Dit het al donkerder en donkerder geword—'n ideale kans om uit die skare uit weg te glip. Maar daardie groot fris ou—Hines—het my aan die arm beetgehad en van hom was daar net so min wegkomkans as van Goliat af. Hy was so opgewonde dat hy my behoorlik saamgesleep het; en ek moes net drafstap om by te hou.

Toe ons eindelijk by die begraafplaas aankom, spoel die skare soos vloedwaters daaroor. En toe ons by die graf beland, ontdek hulle dat daar 'n honderd maal meer skopgrawe byderhand is as wat nodig is—maar dat niemand onthou het om 'n lantern saam te bring nie. Maar hulle't sommer in die geflikker van die weerligte aan die werk gespring en intussen iemand gestuur om by die naaste huis, 'n half- myl daarvandaan, een te gaan leen.

En daar grawe hulle toe dat dit bars; en dit begin pikstikdonker raak, en dit begin reën, en die wind begin al kwaaiër stoot, en die weerligte word al kwaaiër, en die donderweer dreun, maar die mense is so druk besig dat hulle dit nie eers agterkom nie. Een oomblik kan jy elke dingetjie, elke gesig daar in die skare sien, met die skopgrawe vol grond wat uit die graf uitgesmyt word; die volgende oomblik vee die donkerte dit weer alles uit sodat jy niks kan sien nie.

Uiteindelijk kom hulle by die kis en begin die deksel afskroef, en dit gee weer 'n gestamp en 'n gestoot en 'n gedrom af soos wat mens nie aldag te siene kry nie; en so, daar in die donker, was dit iets verskrikliks. Met al die geruk en pluk het Hines my arm vreeslik seer gemaak; maar ek dink hy't skoon van my vergeet, so opgewonde en uitasem was hy.

Skielik blits daar 'n weerligstraal met 'n helder wit lig en iemand skree:

„My goeie hemel, hier lê die sak goud op sy bors!”

Hines geen 'n skree, nes al die ander, en hy los my arm en bars vorentoe om te kyk, en ek skiet daar tussen hulle uit en begin in die donkerte pad toe nael soos wat julle nog nooit tevore 'n mens sien hol het nie.

Dit was net ek daar op die pad, en ek het as't ware gevlie daaroor. Dit wil sê: dit was net ek en daardie stikke duisternis en af en toe die weerligte, en die gesuis van die reën en die getier van die wind en die gebulder van die donderweer; en ek het *oopgelê!*

Toe ek in die dorp aankom, was daar g'n sterfling in sig nie—almal binne oor die storm; dus het ek nie eers gebodder om agterstraatjies te soek nie, maar sommer pylreguit in die hoofstraat afgenael. Toe ek naby ons huis begin kom, mik ek met my oe in dié rigting, maar daar was g'n lig nie—die hele huis was stikdonker. Dit het my bitter jammer en teleurgesteld laat voel; hoekom, weet ek nie. Maar toe, net toe ek daar verbynael, gaan die kers in Mary-Jane se venster aan! Ek kon my hart voel uitswel tot hy wou bars. Maar toe's ek al klaar weer verby en die huis is weg in die donker agter my; vir goed, want ek sou dit nooit weer sien nie. Sy *was* die beste meisiekind wat ek nog ooit teëgekom het, met die meeste pit in haar van álmal.

Sodra ek ver genoeg bokant die dorp was om die slonsbank te haal, het ek my oë begin oophou vir 'n skuit wat ek kon leen; en die eerste die beste een

wat die weerlig my laat sien het, het ek gegryp en gemaak dat ek wegkom. Dit was 'n kano wat net met 'n tou vas was. Die slonsbank was deksels ver, doer in die middel van die rivier, maar ek het g'n oomblik versuim nie. En toe ek eindelijk by die vlot aankom, was ek so poegaai dat ek net eenvoudig daar sou neergeval en bly hyg het as ek dit durf waag het. Maar dit was onmoontlik. Die oomblik toe ek my voet op die vlot sit, roep ek:

„Opskud, Jim, sny los. Vaderdank, ons is nou verlos van hulle!”

Jim peul uit die tentjie uit en bestorm my met uitgestrekte arms, so bly is hy; maar toe ek hóm skielik in die weerlig gewaar, trap ek agteruit en val oorboord: ek het skoon vergeet dat hy ou koning Lear en 'n versuipte Arabier en alles tegelyk was en hy't my skoon my wind laat uitskrik. Maar Jim het my weer uit die water uitgehaal en hy wou my net begin omhels en te kere gaan van blydskap omdat ek nou terug was en omdat ons verlos was van die koning en die hertog. Maar ek keer haastig:

„Nie nou nie. Wag vir oggendete—wag vir oggendete! Sny los en laat ons wegkom!”

Binne twee sekondes begin ons afdryf. En dit was skielik so ver- skriklik heerlik om weer vry te wees, alleen bymekaar op die groot rivier, met niemand om ons te pla nie. Ek móés eenvoudig 'n bietjie rondans en spring en my hakke in die lug kap; ek kon dit net nie help nie. Maar so met die derde klap hoor ek 'n geluid wat ek maar alte goed ken. Ek hou my asem op en luister—en sowaar, toe die volgende weerligstraal oor die rivier flits, toe sien ek hoe hulle ooplê by die roeispane om ons in te haal! Die koning en die hertog.

Net daar sak ek op die stompe inmekaar en gee die saak gewonne; en ek moes so wrintiewaar ook net *knyp* om nie te grens nie.

SECTION 30

When they got aboard, the king went for me, and shook me by the collar, and says:

“Tryin’ to give us the slip, was ye, you pup! Tired of our company—hey?”

I says:

“No, your majesty, we warn’t—*please* don’t, your majesty!”

“Quick, then, and tell us what *was* your idea, or I’ll shake the insides out o’ you!”

“Honest, I’ll tell you everything, just as it happened, your majesty. The man that had aholt of me was very good to me, and kept saying he had a boy about as big as me that died last year, and he was sorry to see a boy in such a dangerous fix; and when they was all took by surprise by finding the gold, and made a rush for the coffin, he lets go of me and whispers, ‘Heel it, now, or they’ll hang ye, sure!’ and I lit out. It didn’t seem no good for *me* to stay—I couldn’t do nothing, and I didn’t want to be hung if I could get away. So I never stopped running till I found the canoe; and when I got here I told Jim to hurry, or they’d catch me and hang me yet, and said I was afeard you and the duke wasn’t alive, now, and I was awful sorry, and so was Jim, and was awful glad when we see you coming, you may ask Jim if I didn’t.”

Jim said it was so; and the king told him to shut up,

and said, “Oh, yes, it’s *mighty* likely!” and shook me up again, and said he reckoned he’d drown me. But the duke says:

“Leggo the boy, you old idiot! Would *you* a done any different? Did you inquire around for *him*, when you got loose? *I* don’t remember it.”

So the king let go of me, and begun to cuss that town and everybody in it. But the duke says:

“You better a blame sight give *yourself* a good cussing, for you’re the one that’s entitled to it most. You hain’t done a thing, from the start, that had any sense in it, except coming out so cool and cheeky with that imaginary blue-arrow mark. That *was* bright—it was right down bully; and it was the thing that saved us. For if it hadn’t been for that, they’d a jailed us till them Englishmen’s baggage come—and then—the penitentiary, you bet! But that trick took ’em to the graveyard, and the gold done us a still bigger kindness; for if the excited fools hadn’t let go all holts and made that rush to get a look, we’d a slept in our cravats to-night—cravats warranted to *wear*, too—longer than *we’d* need ’em.^{e1}”

They was still a minute—thinking—then the king says, kind of absent-minded like:

“Mf! And we reckoned the *niggers* stole it!”

That made me squirm!

“Yes,” says the duke, kinder slow, and deliberate, and sarcastic, “*We* did.”

After about a half minute, the king drawls out:

“Leastways—I did.”

The duke says, the same way:

“On the contrary—I did.”

The king kind of ruffles up, and says:

“Looky here, Bilgewater, what’r you referrin’ to?”

The duke says, pretty brisk:

“When it comes to that, maybe you’ll let me ask, what was *you* referring to?”

“Shucks!” says the king, very sarcastic; “but *I* don’t know—maybe you was asleep, and didn’t know what you was about.”

The duke bristles right up, now, and says:

“Oh, let *up* on this cussed nonsense—do you take me for a blame’ fool? Don’t you reckon *I* know who hid that money in that coffin?”

“Yes, sir! I know you *do* know—because you done it yourself!”

“It’s a lie!”—and the duke went for him. The king sings out:

“Take y’r hands off!—leggo my throat!—I take it all back!”

The duke says:

“Well, you just own up, first, that you *did* hide that

money there, intending to give me the slip one of these days, and come back and dig it up, and have it all to yourself.”

“Wait jest a minute, duke—answer me this one question, honest and fair; if you didn’t put the money there, say it, and I’ll b’lieve you, and take back everything I said.”

“You old scoundrel, I didn’t, and you know I didn’t. There, now!

“Well, then, I b’lieve you. But answer me only jest this one more—now *don’t* git mad; didn’t you have it in your *mind* to hook the money and hide it?”

The duke never said nothing for a little bit; then he says:

“Well—I don’t care if I *did*, I didn’t *do* it, anyway. But you not only had it in mind to do it, but you *done* it.”

“I wisht I may never die if I done it, duke, and that’s honest. I won’t say I warn’t *goin’* to do it, because I *was*; but you—I mean somebody—got in ahead o’ me.”

“It’s a lie! You done it, and you got to say you done it, or—”

The king begun to gurgle, and then he gasps out:

“’Nough!—*I own up!*”

I was very glad to hear him say that, it made me feel much more easier than what I was feeling before. So the duke took his hands off, and says:

“If you ever deny it again, I’ll drown you. It’s *well* for you to set there and blubber like a baby—it’s fitten for you, after the way you’ve acted. I never see such an old ostrich for wanting to gobble everything—and I a trusting you all the time, like you was my own father. You ought to been ashamed of yourself to stand by and hear it saddled onto a lot of poor niggers and you never say a word for ’em. It makes me feel ridiculous to think I was soft enough to *believe* that rubbage. Cuss you, I can see, now, why you was so anxious to make up the deffesit—you wanted to get what money I’d got out of the Nonesuch and one thing or another, and scoop it *all!*”

The king says, timid, and still a snuffling:

“Why, duke, it was you that said make up the deffersit, it warn’t me.”

“Dry up! I don’t want to hear no more *out* of you!” says the duke. “And *now* you see what you *got* by it. They’ve got all their own money back, and all of *ourn* but a shekel or two, *besides*. G’long to bed—and don’t you deffersit *me* no more deffersits, long ’s *you* live!”

So the king sneaked into the wigwam, and took to his bottle for comfort; and before long the duke tackled *his* bottle; and so in about a half an hour they was as thick as thieves again, and the tighter they got, the lovinger they got; and went off a snoring in each other’s arms. They both got powerful mellow, but I noticed the king didn’t get mellow enough to forget to remember to not deny about hiding the money-bag again. That made me feel easy and satisfied. Of course when they got to snoring, we had a long gabble, and I told Jim

Chapter 30

Toe hulle aan boord kom, storm die koning reguit op my af, kry my aan die kraag beet en sê: „Jy probeer vir ons weghol, nê, jou klein satang? Moeg vir ons geselskap, he?”

„Nee, u majesteit, nog nooit. *Asseblief*, u majesteit, moenie!” pleit ek.

„Nou opskud dan en laat ons hoor wat jou plan was, anders skud ek jou binnegoed uit jou uit!”

„Ek sal julle alles vertel, u majesteit, sowaar, nes dit gebeur het. Daardie man wat my beetgehad het, was baie goed vir my en hy’t aanhou sê dat hy ’n seun gehad het wat net so oud soos ek was, en die is toe laas jaar dood; en hy was tog te jammer om ’n seun in so ’n penarie te sien. Toe die klomp almal so verbaas was oor die goud en die doodkis bestorm het, het hy my hand gelos en gefluister: „Maak dat jy wegkom, anders hang hulle jou op!” En toe hoi ek. Daar was g’n rede waarom ek moes bly nie: wat kon ék tog doen ? Ek wou nie opgehang word as ek kon wegkom nie. Toe’t ek net aanhou hardloop tot ek die kano gekry het. En toe ek hier aankom, het ek vir Jim gesê om op te skud, anders gaan hulle my tóg inhaal en ophang; want ek was bang dat julle teen dié tyd nie meer lewendig was nie. Ek was alte jammer daaroor, en Jim ook, en ons was vreeslik bly toe ons julle sien aankom, vra maar vir Jim.”

Jim het dit beaam, en toe sê die koning vir hom om sy snater te hou; en hy voeg by: „Moet ek dit nou glo?” En hy skud my weer ’n slag en sê hy’s lus en versuip my.

Maar die hertog sê: „Los die seun, jou ou swaap! Sou jy miskien iets anders gedoen het? Het jy miskien na hóm gesoek toe jy daar weghol? *Ek* onthou daar niks van nie.”

Toe laat los die koning my en begin die dorp en al die inwoners te verwens.

Maar die hertog sê: „Hoekom vloek jy nie jousélf ’n slag nie? Jy’s die een wat dit die meeste verdien. Van die begin af het jy net stommi- teite aangevang—behalwe toe jy so koeltjies gesê het van die kamma- kastige blou pyltjie. Dit was slim. Dit was sommer eersteklas. En dit het ons gered ook. Want as dit nie dáárvoor was nie, dan’t hulle ons opgesluit tot daardie Engelse se bagasie opdaag—en dan was ons in die tronk! Maar daardie plannetjie van jou het gemaak dat hulle kerkhof toe is, en die goud het ons nog ’n groter guns bewys, want as die opgewonde spul nie alles net so gelos het om te gaan kyk nie, dan’t ons vannag in ons hemde geslaap—die soort hemp wat mens nooit opdra nie.”

'n Rukkie was dit stil. Toe sê die koning so half afgetrokke: „Gmf! En ons het gedink dis die *negers* wat dit gesteel het!”

Dit het my dadelik kriewelrig laat voel!

„Ja,” antwoord die hertog, so half stadig en vasberade en sarkas- ties. „Dis wat *ons* gedink het.”

Na sowat 'n halfminuut sê die koning afgemete: „Dis ten minste wat *ek* gedink het.”

En die hertog sê, op dieselfde manier: „Inteendeel: dis wat *ek* gedink het.”

Dit maak die koning half boos en hy vra: „Kyk hier, Bilgewater, wat bedoel jy daarmee?”

„Terwyl jy so vra, kan ek jôú miskien vra: wat bedoel /v daarmee?”

„Vervlaks,” antwoord die koning sarkasties. „*Ek* weet nie. Dalk was jy aan die slaap. Dalk het jy nie geweet wat jy doen nie.”

„Aag, staak tog die spul bog! Dink jy ek is 'n aap? Dink jy miskien *ek* weet nie wie die geld daar in die kis weggesteek het nie?”

„Ja, *natuurlik* weet jy! Want jy't dit dan self gedoen!”

„Jy lieg!” En die hertog bestorm hom.

„Los my!” gil die koning. „Laat los my keel! Ek trek alles terug!” Die hertog antwoord: „Nou goed. Maar erken dan eers reguit dat dit *jy* was wat die geld daar weggesteek het, met die plan om een van die dae van my af weg te glip en dit vir jouself te gaan uitgrawe.” „Wag nou 'n bietjie, hertog. Sê my nou eers dit, wees eerlik: as jy nie die geld daar weggesteek het nie, sê so, dan sal ek jou glo en alles terugtrek wat ek gesê het!”

„Natuurlik het ek nie, jou ou skelm! En jy weet dit. Nou toe!” „Goed, ek glo jou. Maar antwoord nog net die één vragie— moenie nou kwaad word nie: was jy nie van *plan* om die geld te gaan wegsteek nie?”

Die hertog bly 'n rukkie stil, dan sê hy: „Wel. . . wat daarvan as ek so 'n plan sou gehad het? Ek het dit nie *gedoen* nie. Maar jy—jy't nie net so 'n plan gehad nie, jy't dit *gedoen* ook!”

„Ek belowe jou, as ek dit gedoen het, hoef ek nooit dood te gaan nie, hertog. Dis die waarheid. Ek sal nie sê ek het nie so 'n *plan* gehad nie, want ek *het*. Maar toe't jy . . . ek bedoel, toe't iemand anders my voorgespring.”

„Jy lieg! Jy't dit gedoen, en jy gaan dit erken ook, anders . . .” Die koning begin roggel; en eindelik hyg hy: „Genoeg! Ek gee oor!”

Ek was tog te bly toe ek hom dít hoor sê; dit het my veel vryer laat asemhaal. Toe laat los die hertog hom en hy sê:

„As jy dit ooit weer ontken, sal ek jou versuip. Jy kan gerus maar hier sit en grens soos 'n baba—dit pas by jou, na die manier waarop jy opgetree het. Ek het nog nooit so 'n ou volstruis soos jy gesien nie: wil net eenvoudig alles verorber. En al die tyd het ek jou vertrou asof jy my eie pa was! Jy behoort jou te skaam om te staan en hoor hoe die skuld op 'n klomp slawe gepak word en jy probeer nie eers vir hulle in die bresse tree nie. Dit laat my skoon simpel voel om te dink dat ek so mal was om al die twak te glo. Vervlaks, nou kan ek ver- staan hoekom jy so gretig was om die tekort aan te vul—jy wou nog die

geld wat ék uit die *Weergalose Majesteit* gemaak het, ook inpalm!”

Die koning bly snuif-snuif sit en sê half versigtig: „Maar dit was dan jý wat gesê het ons moet die tekort aanvul, hertog!”

„Hou jou snater! Van jóú wil ek niks meer hoor nie!” sê die hertog.

„Sien jy nou wat *het jy* daarvan ? Hulle’t al hulle geld terug en amper al ons s’n ook! Loop slaap jy, en praat net wéér ’n slag van tekorte, dan sien ons wat gebeur!”

Toe sluip die koning druiptert die tent in, met sy bottel om hom te troos; en kort daarna dam die hertog sý bottel ook by; en binne ’n halfuur was hulle weer groot vriende, en hoe dronker hulle word, hoe liewer word hulle vir mekaar; en oplaas raak hulle in mekaar se arms aan die slaap. Teen dié tyd was hulle altwee taamlik voos, maar die koning was nie té voos om te vergeet om te onthou om nie weer die geldstelery te ontken nie. Dit het my baie tevrede en gemaklik laat voel. En natuurlik, toe hulle nou eindelijk aan die snork was, het ons aan die gesels geraak en ek het Jim die hele storie vertel.

SECTION 31

We hadn't stop again at any town, for days and days; kept right along down the river. We was down south in the warm weather, now, and a mighty long ways from home. We begun to come to trees with Spanish moss^{i26e1} on them, hanging down from the limbs like long gray beards. It was the first I ever see it growing, and it made the woods look solemn and dismal. So now the frauds reckoned they was out of danger, and they begun to work the villages again.

First they done a lecture on temperance; but they didn't make enough for them both to get drunk on. Then in another village they started a dancing school; but they didn't know no more how to dance than a kangaroo does; so the first prance they made, the general public jumped in and pranced them out of town. Another time they tried a go at yellocution; but they didn't yellocute long till the audience got up and give them a solid good cussing and made them skip out. They tackled missionarying, and mesmerizing, and doctoring, and telling fortunes, and a little of everything; but they couldn't seem to have no luck. So at last they got just about dead broke, and laid around the raft, as she floated along, thinking, and thinking, and never saying nothing, by the half a day at a time, and dreadful blue and desperate.

And at last they took a change, and begun to lay their heads together in the wigwam and talk low and confidential two or three hours at a time. Jim and me got uneasy. We didn't like the look of it. We judged

they was studying up some kind of worse deviltry than ever. We turned it over and over, and at last we made up our minds they was going to break into somebody's house or store, or was going into the counterfeit-money business, or something. So then we was pretty scared, and made up an agreement that we wouldn't have nothing in the world to do with such actions, and if we ever got the least show we would give them the cold shake, and clear out and leave them behind. Well, early one morning we hid the raft in a good safe place about two mile below a little bit of a shabby village, named Pikesville^{e2}, and the king he went ashore, and told us all to stay hid whilst he went up to town and smelt around to see if anybody had got any wind of the Royal Nonesuch there yet. ("House to rob, you *mean*," says I to myself; "and when you get through robbing it you'll come back here and wonder what's become of me and Jim and the raft—and you'll have to take it out in wondering.") And he said if he warn't back by midday, the duke and me would know it was all right, and we was to come along.

So we staid where we was. The duke he fretted and sweated around, and was in a mighty sour way. He scolded us for everything, and we couldn't seem to do nothing right; he found fault with every little thing. Something was a-brewing, sure. I was good and glad when midday come and no king; we could have a change, anyway—and maybe a chance for *the* change, on top of it. So me and the duke went up to the village, and hunted around there for the king, and by-and-by we found him in the back room of a little low doggery^{e3}, very tight, and a lot of loafers bullyragging him for sport, and he a cussing and threatening with all

his might, and so tight he couldn't walk, and couldn't do nothing to them. The duke he begun to abuse him for an old fool, and the king begun to sass back; and the minute they was fairly at it, I lit out, and shook the reefs out of my hind legs, and spun down the river road like a deer—for I see our chance; and I made up my mind that it would be a long day before they ever see me and Jim again. I got down there all out of breath but loaded up with joy, and sung out—

“Set her loose, Jim, we're all right, now!”

But there warn't no answer, and nobody come out of the wigwam. Jim was gone! I set up a shout—and then another—and then another one; and run this way and that in the woods, whooping and screeching; but it warn't no use—old Jim was gone^{e4}. Then I set down and cried; I couldn't help it. But I couldn't set still long. Pretty soon I went out on the road, trying to think what I better do, and I run across a boy walking, and asked him if he'd seen a strange nigger, dressed so and so, and he says:

“Yes.”

“Whereabouts?” says I.

“Down to Silas Phelps's place, two mile below here. He's a runaway nigger, and they've got him. Was you looking for him?”

“You bet I ain't! I run across him in the woods about an hour or two ago, and he said if I hollered he'd cut my livers out—and told me to lay down and stay where I was; and I done it. Been there ever since; afeard to come out.”

"Well," he says, "you needn't be afeard no more, becuz they've got him. He run off f'm down South, som'ers."

"It's a good job they got him."

"Well, I *reckon!* There's two hunderd dollars reward on him. It's like picking up money out'n the road."

"Yes, it is—and I could a had it if I'd been big enough; I see him *first*. Who nailed him?"

"It was an old fellow—a stranger—and he sold out his chance in him for forty dollars, becuz he's got to go up the river and can't wait. Think o' that, now! You bet I'd wait, if it was seven year."

"That's me, every time," says I. "But maybe his chance ain't worth no more than that, if he'll sell it so cheap. Maybe there's something ain't straight about it."

"But it *is*, though—straight as a string. I see the handbill myself. It tells all about him, to a dot—paints him like a picture, and tells the plantation he's frum, below Newrleans. Nosirree-bob, they ain't no trouble 'bout *that* speculation, you bet you. Say, gimme a chaw tobacker, won't ye?"

I didn't have none, so he left. I went to the raft, and set down in the wigwam to think. But I couldn't come to nothing. I thought till I wore my head sore, but I couldn't see no way out of the trouble. After all this long journey, and after all we'd done for them scoundrels, here was it all come to nothing, everything all busted up and ruined, because they could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, too, for

forty dirty dollars.

Once I said to myself it would be a thousand times better for Jim to be a slave at home where his family was, as long as he'd *got* to be a slave, and so I'd better write a letter to Tom Sawyer and tell him to tell Miss Watson where he was. But I soon give up that notion, for two things: she'd be mad and disgusted at his rascality and ungratefulness for leaving her, and so she'd sell him straight down the river^{e5} again; and if she didn't, everybody naturally despises an ungrateful nigger, and they'd make Jim feel it all the time, and so he'd feel ornery and disgraced. And then think of *me*! It would get all around, that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was to ever see anybody from that town again, I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame. That's just the way: a person does a low-down thing, and then he don't want to take no consequences of it. Thinks as long as he can hide it, it ain't no disgrace. That was my fix exactly. The more I studied about this, the more my conscience went to grinding me, and the more wicked and low-down and ornery I got to feeling. And at last, when it hit me all of a sudden that here was the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness was being watched all the time from up there in heaven, whilst I was stealing a poor old woman's nigger that hadn't ever done me no harm, and now was showing me there's One that's always on the lookout, and ain't agoing to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur and no further, I most dropped in my tracks I was so scared. Well, I tried the best I could to kinder soften it up somehow for myself, by saying I was brung up wicked^{e6}, and so I

warn't so much to blame; but something inside of me kept saying, "There was the Sunday school, you could a gone to it; and if you'd a done it they'd a learnt you, there, that people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire."

It made me shiver. And I about made up my mind to pray; and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of a boy I was, and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come. Why wouldn't they? It warn't no use to try and hide it from Him. Nor from *me*, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn't come. It was because my heart warn't right; it was because I warn't square; it was because I was playing double. I was letting *on* to give up sin, but away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie—and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie—I found that out.

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter—and *then* see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather, right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

Miss Watson your runaway nigger Jim^{e7} is down here two mile below Pikesville and Mr. Phelps has got him and he will give him up for the reward if you send.

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking;¹²⁷—thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, all the time, in the day, and in the nighttime, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and suchlike times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the *only* one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll *go* to hell"—and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no

more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.

Then I set to thinking over how to get at it, and turned over considerable many ways in my mind; and at last fixed up a plan that suited me. So then I took the bearings of a woody island that was down the river a piece, and as soon as it was fairly dark I crept out with my raft and went for it, and hid it there, and then turned in. I slept the night through, and got up before it was light, and had my breakfast, and put on my store clothes, and tied up some others and one thing or another in a bundle, and took the canoe and cleared for shore. I landed below where I judged was Phelps's place, and hid my bundle in the woods, and then filled up the canoe with water, and loaded rocks into her and sunk her where I could find her again when I wanted her, about a quarter of a mile below a little steam sawmill that was on the bank.

Then I struck up the road, and when I passed the mill I see a sign on it, "Phelps's Sawmill," and when I come to the farmhouses, two or three hundred yards further along, I kept my eyes peeled, but didn't see nobody around, though it was good daylight, now. But I didn't mind, because I didn't want to see nobody just yet—I only wanted to get the lay of the land. According to my plan, I was going to turn up there from the village, not from below. So I just took a look, and shoved along,

straight for town. Well, the very first man I see, when I got there, was the duke. He was sticking up a bill for the Royal Nonesuch—three-night performance—like that other time. *They* had the cheek, them frauds! I was right on him, before I could shirk. He looked astonished, and says:

“Hel-*lo*!. Where’d *you* come from?” Then he says, kind of glad and eager, “Where’s the raft?—got her in a good place?”

I says:

“Why, that’s just what I was agoing to ask your grace.”

Then he didn’t look so joyful—and says:

“What was your idea for asking *me*?” he says.

“Well,” I says, “when I see the king in that doggery yesterday, I says to myself, we can’t get him home for hours, till he’s soberer; so I went a loafing around town to put in the time, and wait. A man up and offered me ten cents to help him pull a skiff over the river and back to fetch a sheep, and so I went along; but when we was dragging him to the boat, and the man left me ahold of the rope and went behind him to shove him along, he was too strong for me, and jerked loose and run, and we after him. We didn’t have no dog, and so we had to chase him all over the country till we tired him out. We never got him till dark, then we fetched him over, and I started down for the raft. When I got there and see it was gone, I says to myself, ‘they’ve got into trouble and had to leave; and they’ve took my nigger, which is the only nigger I’ve got in the world, and now I’m in a strange country, and ain’t got no

property no more, nor nothing, and no way to make my living;’ so I set down and cried. I slept in the woods all night. But what *did* become of the raft then?—and Jim, poor Jim!”

“Blamed if I know—that is, what’s become of the raft. That old fool had made a trade and got forty dollars, and when we found him in the doggery the loafers had matched half dollars with him and got every cent but what he’d spent for whisky; and when I got him home late last night and found the raft gone, we said, ‘That little rascal has stole our raft and shook us, and run off down the river.’

“I wouldn’t shake my *nigger*, would I?—the only nigger I had in the world, and the only property.”

“We never thought of that. Fact is, I reckon we’d come to consider him *our* nigger; yes, we did consider him so—goodness knows we had trouble enough for him. So when we see the raft was gone, and we flat broke, there warn’t anything for it but to try the Royal Nonesuch another shake. And I’ve pegged along ever since, dry as a powder-horn. Where’s that ten cents? Give it here.”

I had considerable money, so I give him ten cents, but begged him to spend it for something to eat, and give me some, because it was all the money I had, and I hadn’t had nothing to eat since yesterday. He never said nothing. The next minute he whirls on me and says:

“Do you reckon that nigger would blow on us? We’d skin him if he done that!”

“How can he blow? Hain’t he run off?”

“No! That old fool sold him, and never divided with me, and the money’s gone.”

“*Sold* him?” I says, and begun to cry; “why, he was *my* nigger, and that was my money. Where is he?—I want my nigger.”

“Well, you can’t *get* your nigger, that’s all—so dry up your blubbering. Looky here—do you think *you’d* venture to blow on us? Blamed if I think I’d trust you. Why, if you *was* to blow on us——”

He stopped, but I never see the duke look so ugly out of his eyes before. I went on a-whimpering, and says:

“I don’t want to blow on nobody; and I ain’t got no time to blow, nohow. I got to turn out and find my nigger.”

He looked kinder bothered, and stood there with his bills fluttering on his arm, thinking, and wrinkling up his forehead. At last he says:

“I’ll tell you something. We got to be here three days. If you’ll promise you won’t blow, and won’t let the nigger blow, I’ll tell you where to find him.”

So I promised, and he says:

“A farmer by the name of Silas Ph——” and then he stopped. You see he started to tell me the truth; but when he stopped, that way, and begun to study and think again, I reckoned he was changing his mind. And so he was. He wouldn’t trust me; he wanted to make sure of having me out of the way the whole three days. So pretty soon he says: “The man that bought him is

named Abram Foster—Abram G. Foster—and he lives forty mile back here in the country, on the road to Lafayette.”

“All right,” I says, “I can walk it in three days. And I’ll start this very afternoon.”

“No you won’t, you’ll start *now*; and don’t you lose any time about it, neither, nor do any gabbling by the way. Just keep a tight tongue in your head and move right along, and then you won’t get into trouble with *us*, d’ye hear?”

That was the order I wanted, and that was the one I played for. I wanted to be left free to work my plans.

“So clear out,” he says; “and you can tell Mr. Foster whatever you want to. Maybe you can get him to believe that Jim *is* your nigger—some idiots don’t require documents—least-ways I’ve heard there’s such down South here. And when you tell him the handbill and the reward’s bogus, maybe he’ll believe you when you explain to him what the idea was for getting ’em out. Go ’long, now, and tell him anything you want to; but mind you don’t work your jaw any *between* here and there.”

So I left, and struck for the back country. I didn’t look around, but I kinder felt like he was watching me. But I knowed I could tire him out at that. I went straight out in the country as much as a mile, before I stopped; then I doubled back through the woods towards Phelps’s. I reckoned I better start in on my plan straight off, without fooling around, because I wanted to stop Jim’s mouth till these fellows could get away. I didn’t want no trouble with their kind. I’d seen all I

wanted to of them, and wanted to get entirely shut of them.

Chapter 31

Dae en dae aanmekaar het ons dit nie durf

waag om by enige dorp aan te gaan nie en het ons maar al met die rivier langs gehou. Ons het by borne begin verbykom waaraan daar druipmos soos lang grys baarde hang. Dis die eerste keer dat ek dit sien groei het, en dit het die bosse sommer somber en neerdrukkend laat lyk. Nou het die skelms begin reken dat hulle ver genoeg van die gevaar af weg was, sodat hulle weer die dorpe kon bydam.

Eers het hulle 'n lesing oor matigheid gehou, maar daaruit het hulle nie eens genoeg gemaak om op dronk te word nie. In 'n ander dorp het hulle met 'n dansskool begin, maar hulle kon net so min dans as 'n kangaroo, en met hulle eerste paar walspassies het die mense hulle bestorm en uit die dorp uitgewals. By 'n ander geleentheid het hulle weer jelokusie probeer, maar hulle was nog nie behoorlik op stryk nie, toe die gehoor opstaan, hulle begin uitskel en hulle daar wegja. Hulle het sendingwerk gedoen, en mense gehipnotiseer, en ander mense probeer genees—so 'n bietjie van alles; maar dit het nêrens juis gewerk nie. Uiteindelik was hulle behoorlik plat-sak, en toe't hulle maar op die vlot kom lê en so al aan die verder drywe gelê en dink en dink en g'n dooie woord gepraat nie, sommer 'n halfdag op 'n slag, bitterlik neerslagtig en desperaat.

Uiteindelik het hulle vir 'n verandering in die tent gaan lê en twee of drie uur op 'n slag hulle koppe bymekaargesit om iets te prakseer. Ek en Jim het ongemaklik begin voel. Die saak het ons net niks aangestaan nie. Ons het geskat dat hulle besig was om erger duiwelstreke as tevore te beplan; nadat ons dit goed uitgepluis het, het ons besluit dat hulle seker van plan was om by 'n huis of 'n winkel te gaan inbreek of met vervalste geld te begin lol of so iets. Dit het ons danig skrikkerig laat voel, en ons het ooreengekom dat ons niks met so iets te doene sou hê nie; en nes ons 'n kansie kry, sou ons hulle afskud en maak dat ons van hulle af wegkom. Nou ja, een more steek ons toe die vlot in 'n lekker skuiltejtjie weg, sowat twee myl onderkant 'n toingrige ou dorpie met die naam van Pikesville, en die koning gaan aan wal en sê vir ons ander om daar te bly wegkruip terwyl hy 'n bietjie gaan rondsnuffel om uit te vind of die mense daar al iets van die Weergalose Majesteit te hore gekom het. („Jy bedoel jy wil uitvind of daar 'n huis is wat jy kan bested,” dink ek by myselfers. „En as jy klaar is met jou stelery, dan sal jy terugkom hiernatoe en wonder wat van my en Jim en die vlot geword het—en jy sal maar moet tevrede wees om net te wonder.”) En as hy teen die middag nog

nie terug is nie, sê hy, dan moet ek en die hertog weet dis alles in orde, ons kan maar kom.

So't ons toe gebly waar ons was. Die hertog het die hele tyd nukkerig en stuurs en bekommerd bly rondtrap, baie onrustig oor iets. Hy't ons oor elke kleinigheidjie ingevlieg en ons kon nou net mooi niks na sy sin doen nie. Daar was sekerlik iets aan die broei. Ek was in my noppies toe dit middag word en daar nog g'n teken van die koning is nie. Dan sou daar ten minste 'n bietjie afwisseling van die gewone ou roetine vir ons voorlê—en wie weet, 'n kans om weg te kom ook. Ek en die hertog is dus dorp toe, en na 'n hele rukkie se gesoek kry ons horn in die agterkamertjie van 'n smerige ou kroegie, waar hy papdronk sit terwyl 'n klomp jillers besig is om met hom gek te skeer; en hy skel terug vir die vales, maar hy is so hoog in die takke dat hy nie kan loop nie, dus kan hy hulle niks doen nie. Die hertog begin hom uitskel vir 'n ou stommerik, en die koning raas terug; en net toe hulle mooi aan die gang is, glip ek daar uit en lê die rieme neer. Soos 'n takbok nael ek al langs die rivierpad af, want nou was dit mos ons kans; ek het klaar besluit dat dit sommer lank gaan wees voor hulle twee weer vir my en Jim te siene kry. Skoon uitasem, maar so bly dat ek kan bars, kom ek by die vlot aan. „Maak maar los, Jim!” skree ek. „Die pad is oop vorentoe.” Maar ek kry g'n antwoord nie en daar kom ook niemand by die tent uit nie. Jim was weg! Ek roep 'n slag so hard as wat ek kan, en toe weer 'n slag, en weer; en begin heen en weer deur die bosse hardloop en skree en roep. Maar dit help alles net mooi niks: ou Jim was vort. Toe gaan sit ek net daar en begin huil; ek kon dit net nie help nie. Maar ek kon ook nie lank so bly stilsit nie. Gou-gou wip ek weer op en loop pad se kant toe om 'n uitweg te probeer prakseer. En daar loop ek toe 'n seun raak. Het hy dalk 'n vreemde slaaf gewaar wat só en só aangetrek was?

„Ja,” antwoord hy.

„Waarlanges ?” vra ek.

„Daar by Silas Phelps se plaas, twee myl laer af. Dis 'n slaaf wat weggehol het, en hulle't horn aangekeer. Is jy op soek na hom?” „Natuurlik nie. Ek het hom so 'n paar uur gelede in die bosse gewaar en toe sê hy as ek skree, dan gaan hy my binnegoed uitslag; hy't my gedwing om net daar te bly lê—en ek het so gemaak ook. Ek was die hele tyd nog daar, te bang om uit te kom.”

„Wel, jy hoef nie meer bang te wees nie, want hulle't hom gevang,” sê hy. „Hy kom iewers uit die suide uit.”

„Dis 'n goeie ding dat hulle hom gevang het.”

„Ek sou so dink! Daar's driehonderd dollar op sy kop. Dis net so goed asof mens die geld in die pad optel.”

„Dis waar, ja. En as ek net groot genoeg was, dan kon *ek* dit gehad het, want ek het hom eerste gesien. Wie't hom gevang?”

„Dit was 'n oubaas—'n vreemdeling. Hy't hom glo gevang, maar het sy aanspraak op hom verkoop vir veertig dollar want hy moet glo stroom-op en

hy kan nie wag nie. Is hy nou nie verspot nie? Gits, ek sal sewe jaar lank wag vir so 'n prysgeld as dit moet."

„Ek ook,” sê ek. „Maar dalk is sy aanspraak niks meer werd nie, as hy hom so goedkoop verkoop. Dalk is daar iewers 'n knoeiery.” „Nooit. G'n stuk knoeiery nie. Ek het self die kennisgewing gesien. Dit vertel alles van hom; dis so goed soos 'n portret; dit sê waarvan- daan hy kom ook—van onderkant New Orleans af. Nee, ou maat, daar's g'n knoeiery in dié saak nie, dit kan jy maar van my neem. Jong, het jy dan nie vir my 'n pruimpie nie?"

Ek het niks gehad nie, dus is hy weer vort. Ek is terug na die vlot toe om daar in die tent te loop sit en dink. Maar dit het niks gehelp nie. Ek het my kop skoon seer gedink, maar ek kon g'n uitweg prak- seer nie. Ná hierdie hele lang reis, na alles wat ons vir daardie twee skurke gedoen het, sit ek nou hier met niks; alles is kapot, en dit omdat hulle die vermetelheid kon hê om Jim só te verneuk en hom vir die res van sy lewe weer 'n slaaf te maak, en dit nogal tussen vreemde mense boonop—en dit vir veertig vuile dollars.

Kyk, sê ek eenkeer vir myself, as Jim dan 'n slaaf *moet* wees, dan's dit mos 'n duisend maal beter dat hy tuis by sy mense is; ek kan dus gerus vir Tom Sawyer 'n brief skryf om hom te vra om vir juffrou Watson te vertel waar hy is. Maar ek laat gou weer dié gedagte vaar, hoofsaaklik om twee redes: sy sou so kwaad wees oor sy skelmheid en sy ondankbaarheid met die weglopery dat sy hom daar en dan aan iemand in die suide sal verkoop; en seifs al doen sy dit nie, dan verag almal tog 'n ondankbare neger, en hulle sal dit altyd op Jim uithaal sodat hy sy lewe lank misrabel en verneder sal voel. En wat van *my*? Die mense sou gou uitvind dat Huck Finn 'n neger gehelp het om vry te word; en ek sal dit uit skone skaamte nooit weer durf waag om my voete in daardie dorp te sit nie. So gaan dit mos: 'n mens doen 'n lae agterbakse soort ding en dan wil jy nie die gevolge daarvan dra nie. Jy dink mos dis alles in die haak solank as wat jy dit kan weg- steek. Dit was nou presies die penarie waarin ék gesit het. Hoe meer ek daaroor nagedink het, hoe meer het my gewete my opgekeil en hoe gemener en vrotter het ek gevoel. Skielik dink ek toe daaraan dat dit mos nou die Voorsienigheid se hand is wat my so in die gesig slaat om my te laat onthou dat al my sondes daar van die hemel se kant af dopgelê is terwyl ek 'n slaaf gesteel het van 'n arme ou vrou wat my nog nooit skade aangedoen het nie. En toe ek besef daar's altyd Een wat jou dophou en wat jou toelaat om net tot hier toe kwaad te doen en g'n duim verder nie, toe't ek van skrik amper net daar in my spore neergeval. Ek het my bes gedoen om die saak bietjie makliker te maak vir myself, deur te sê dat ek sleg grootgemaak was en dat ek daarom nie te skuldig kan wees nie; maar iets hier binnekant in my het die hele tyd gesê: „Wat van die Sondagskool? Jy kon mos soon- toe gegaan het, en dan sou hulle jou daar geleer het dat mense wat maak soos wat jy met daardie slaaf gemaak het, pylreguit grootvuur toe gaan.”

Dit het my behoorlik laat bewee. En ek het my vas voorgeneem om te begin bid en te sien of ek nie dalk kon ophou om die soort seun te wees wat ek

tot nou toe was nie, en bietjie beter te word. Ek kniel toe ook net daar. Maar die woorde wou nie kom nie. Hoekom nie ? Dit was tog verniet dat ek dit vir Hom probeer wegsteek, En vir my ook. Ek het goed geweet hoekom hulle nie wil kom nie: dis my hart wat nie reg was nie. Ek was nie eerlik nie; ek was 'n tweegesig. Ek wou *maak* asof ek die sonde laat staan, maar hier diep in my hart het ek nog aan die grootste een van almal bly vasklou. Ek het my bes probeer om my mond sover te kry om te *sê* ek gaan die regte ding doen en vir die slaaf se baas skryf waar hy is; maar ek het goed geweet dis eintlik 'n leuen. En Hy't dit ook geweet. 'n Leuen kry mens nie gebid nie—dit het ek uitgevind.

Ek was dus vol kommer en sorge—propvol; en ek het net nie geweet wát om te doen nie. Toe kry ek eindelijk 'n plan. En ek *sê* vir myself: Ek gaan eers daardie brief skryf—dán sien ons of ek kan bid. En dit was nou *rêrig* verbasend: ek het sommer dadelik so lig soos 'n veertjie gevoel; al my moeilikhede was skoonveld. Ek gaan haal toe 'n potlood en 'n stuk papier en gaan sit, en bly en opge- wonde skryf ek:

Juffrou Watson, jou wegloopslaaf Jim is hier twee myl onderkant Pikesville en mnr. Phelps het hom en hy sal hom terugstuur vir 'n beloning as jy hom laat haal—huck finn.

Nou het ek wonderlik goed gevoel, skoongewas van al my sondes; en dit was die eerste keer in my lewe dat ek ooit so gevoel het; en nou kon ek bid, dit het ek sommer geweet. Maar ek het dit nie dadelik gedoen nie. Ek het eers die papier neergesit en gesit en dink—gedink hoe heerlik dit was dat dit nou gebeur het, en hoe ampertjies ek in die hel beland het. En toe hou ek sommer aan met dink. Ek dink oor ons vaart met die rivier langs; en ek sien vir Jim voor my, aaneen—in die dag, en in die nag, partykeer in die maanlig, partykeer in 'n storm, terwyl ons maar heeltyd verder drywe en gesels en sing en lag. Maar snaaks, ek kon aan niks dink wat my vies maak vir hom nie; al die gedagtes was van die ánder soort. Ek kon onthou hoe hy my wagbeurte deur gesit en waghoe het saam met sy eie, sodat ek kon bly slaap; ek kon onthou hoe bly hy was toe ek daar uit die mis uit teruggekom het; en weer toe ek hom in die moeras gekry het, daar in die vete se geweste; en so aan; en hy't my altyd troetelnaampies ge- noem en my bederf, en enigiets vir my gedoen, en hy was altyd so goed; en toe onthou ek van die slag toe ek hom gered het deur vir die mense te vertel dat ons pukkies aan boord het, en hoe bly hy was, en hoe hy *gesê* het ek was die beste vriend wat ou Jim op aarde het, en die *enigste* een wat hy oorhet; en toe kyk ek skielik weer op en sien daardie stuk papier.

Ek was nou in 'n hoek gedryf. Ek het dit opgetel en dit in my hand gehou. Ek het skoon bewerasie gehad, want ek het goed geweet dat ek nou vir altyd tussen twee dinge moes kies, 'n Ruk lank het ek die saak bly oorweeg terwyl ek my asem half ophou. En einde ten laaste, toe *sê* ek vir myself:

„Nou goed, dan *gaan* ek maar hel toe.” En ek skeur die ding flenters.

Dit was vreeslike gedagtes, en vreeslike woorde, maar nou was hulle uit.

En ek het die sáak so laat bly; ek het nooit weer daarna gedink aan 'n bekeerders nie. Ek het die hele affêre net so uit my kop uitgeja en besluit ek gaan maar weer die sonde kies—dis tog maar my lewe. Ek is so grootgemaak. Die ander soort lewe is nie vir my bedoel nie. En om mee te begin, sou ek aan die werk spring om Jim

uit sy gevangenskap te verlos; en as ek aan enige erger sonde kon dink, dan sou ek dit dóén. Want terwyl ek nou eenmaal sonde doen, kon ek dit netsowel maar die moeite werd maak, wat.

Toe gaan sit ek om 'n plan van aksie te prakseer. Ek oorweeg 'n hele klomp moontlikhede, maar eindelijk besluit ek op 'n plan. Daarna werk ek mooi uit hoe om te ry na 'n dig beboste eiland so 'n entjie laer af in die rivier, en net toe dit goed donker is, kry ek met die vlot koers soontoe, steek dit netjies weg en gaan slaap. Ek het die hele nag deur geslaap, kort voor dagbreek opgestaan, ontbyt geëet, my winkelklere aangetrek en 'n klompie goed in 'n bondel toegebind, en toe roei ek met die kano wal toe. So 'n entjie onderkant die plek waar die Phelpse behoort te woon, gaan ek aan wal, steek my bondel daar in die bosse weg, laat die kano vol water loop, pak hom vol klippe en laat hom só sink dat ek hom weer kan kom uithaal as ek hom nodig kry: so 'n kwartmyl onderkant 'n klein stoom-saag-meultjie op die wal.

Toe val ek in die pad en toe ek by die meul kom, sien ek 'n uit-hangbord daarop : *Phelps se Saagmeul*. 'n Paar honderd tree verder kom ek by die plaashuisie. Ek hou die wêreld om my fyn dop, maar kan niemand gewaar nie, al is dit teen dié tyd goed lig. Nie dat ek omgee het nie, want ek wou ook niemand raakloop nie—ek wou net eers sien hoe die wêreld daar lyk. My plan was om van die dorp se kant af daar aan te kom, sien, nie van ónder af nie. Ek kyk toe net 'n bietjie rond en stryk aan dorp toe. Nou ja, en die eerste man wat ek daar gewaar is, die hertog, besig om 'n plakkaat vir die Weergalose Majesteit teen 'n muur te plak. Nes daardie vorige keer adverteer hulle drie opvoerings. Die vermetelheid darem! Toe hy my gewaar, staan ek lánks hom.

Verbaas kyk hy op en sê: „En toe? Waar kom jý vandaan?” En blyerig en half gretig vra hy: „Waar's die vlot? Het jy hom goed weggesteek?”

„Maar dis net wat ek nou vir u edele wou kom vra,” sê ek.

Toe lyk hy glad nie meer so bly nie. „Hoekom wou jy dit vir my vra?” wil hy weet.

„Wel,” antwoord ek. „Toe ek gister die koning daar in die kroeg gewaar, het ek by myselfers gedink: ons gaan hóm nie gou by die vlot kry nie; hy sal eers weer moet nugter word. Toe begin ek maar in die dorp rondsleutel om die tyd om te kry. Daar't 'n man verby-gekom en gesê hy sal my tien sent gee as ek hom help om met sy skuit oor die rivier te roei en 'n skaap terug te bring, en ek is toe saam met hom; maar toe ons die skaap wou skuit toe bring, het die man my alleen met die tou gelos en omgeloop om van agter af te stoot. Die ding was vir my te sterk en hy ruk toe los en hoi, met ons agterna. Ons het g'n hond by ons gehad nie, dus moes ons hom die hele wêreld vol jaag om hom moeg te kry. Dit was donker teen die tyd dat ons hom weer gevang het.

Toe het ons hom oorgeroei diékant toe en daarvandaan is ek dadelik vlot toe. Maar die vlot was weg, en ek dink toe: „Hulle’t seker in die moeilikheid beland en toe moes hulle voortgaan. En hulle’t my neger met hulle saamgeneem, die enigste neger wat ek in die hele wye wêreld het, en hier sit ek nou in ’n vreemde plek met niks by my nie, en ek kan niks doen om geld te verdien nie.’ Toe loop sit ek maar en huil. Ek het heelnaag in die bosse geslaap. Maar wat *het* dan van die vlot geword? En Jim—arme Jim!”

„Hoe moet ék weet? Ek bedoel nou van die vlot. Daardie ou swaap het ’n transaksie beklank en veertig dollar daaruit gemaak, en toe ons hom daar in die kroeg kry, het die spul leegglêers met hom aan’t dobbel geraak en alles van hom teruggewen behalwe die geld wat hy op whisky uitgegee het. En toe ek hom laat gisteraand by die vlot terugkry en sien dat die ding weg is, het ons gesê: „Daardie klein vabond het ons vlot gesteel en verder gery en ons net hier laat staan’. ” „Ek sou mos nooit my neger laat agterbly nie! Die enigste neger, die enigste besitting, wat ek in die wye wêreld het.”

„Ons het nooit daaraan gedink nie. Om die waarheid te sê, ek dink ons het hom as óns neger begin beskou. Ja, ons het—al het ons meer as genoeg sonde met hom gehad. Nou ja, toe ons nou sien die vlot is weg en ons sit sonder ’n dooie duit hier, was die Weergalose Majesteit ons enigste uitweg. En van toe af loop ek al sonder ’n krieseltjie kos of drank. Waar’s daardie tien sent van jou? Gee dit hier.”

Ek het ’n hele klomp geld by my gehad, dus het ek hom tien sent gegee, maar ek het hom gesoebat om tog iets te ete te koop en my ook daarvan te gee, want dit was al geld wat ek het en ek loop van die vorige dag af al sonder kos. Hy’t nie eers geantwoord nie.

Toe swaai hy skielik om en vra: „Dink jy daardie neger sal ons loop verklap? Ek slag hom lewendig af as hy dit doen!”

„Hoe kan hy verklap? Het hy dan nie weggehol nie?”

„Nee! Daardie ou swaap het hom gaan verkoop en nooit eers die geld met my gedeel nie, en nou is alles daarmee heen!”

„*Verkoop* ?” vra ek en begin te huil. „Maar dit was dan my slaaf, en my geld. Waar is hy? Ek wil my slaaf terughê!”

„Jy kan hom nie kry nie, en daarmee basta. Hou nou op met jou geslobber. Luister hier: dink jy jý sal dit waag om ons te loop verklap? Moenie dink ek vertrou jou nie. Maar ek sê vir jou, *as* jy ons die dag loop verklap . . .” Hy bly stil, maar ek het’sy oë nog nooit so boosaardig gesien nie.

Ek hou maar aan met kerm, en sê: „Ek wil niemand loop verklap nie. Waar sal ek die tyd kry om so iets te doen? Ek moet my neger loop soek.”

Hy lyk ’n bietjie bekommerd en bly daar staan met die spul plakkate wat flapper in sy hand. Met gefronste voorkop staan hy en dink. Eindelik sê hy: „Luister. Ons moet drie dae lank hier bly. As jy belowe jy sal niks verklap nie, en jy sal sorg dat die neger óók niks uitlap nie, dan sal ek jou sê waar hy is.”

Ek belowe dit sommer dadelik.

Toe sê hy: „’n Boer met die naam van Silas Ph . . .” Hy bly stil.

Hy't begin om my die waarheid te vertel, sien, maar toe hy so skielik stilbly en van voor af begin hinkel, kry ek die gedagte dat hy besig is om van plan te verander. En dit was ook so. Hy wou my net nie vertrou nie; hy wou baie seker maak dat ek die hele drie dae lank uit die pad uit sou bly. Dus sê hy na 'n oomblik; „Die man wat hom gekoop het, is Abram Foster—Abram G. Foster—en hy woon veertig myl diékant toe, op die pad na Lafayette.”

„Goed,” sê ek. „Ek sal dit wel in drie dae kan afstap, en ek kan sommer vanmiddag in die pad val.”

„O nee,” antwoord hy. „Jy gaan sommer nou *dadelik* in die pad val. En moenie gaan staan, en tyd mors of op pad met mense aan die klets raak nie. Hou jou mond styf toe en stap reguit aan, dan sal jy uit die moeilikheid uit bly met *ons*, verstaan?”

Dit was net die opdrag wat ek graag wou hê—die een waarheen ek heeltyd bly mik het. Ek wou vry wees om met my eie planne voort te gaan.

„Nou toe, weg is jy,” sê hy. „Jy kan vir meneer Foster enigiets vertel. Dalk kan jy hom seifs oortuig dat Jim regtig jou slaaf is. Mens kry swape wat nie dokumente vra nie; ten minste, ek het gehoor daar's sulke mense hier in die suide. Vertel vir hom die pamflet en die beloning is alles bog; hy sal jou dalk glo as jy hom vertel hoekom ons met dié plan vorendag gekom het. Nou toe nou. Jy kan hom vertel net wat jy lus het. Maar sorg net dat jy jou mond hou *tot* jy by sy plaas aankom.”

Toe maak ek dat ek daar wegkom, op die pad na die binneland. Ek het nie omgekyk nie, maar aan my bas gevoel dat hy my bly dop- hou. Maar ek het geweet ek sou hom gou moeg maak. Ek het 'n hele myl so aangestap voor ek gaan staan het; toe het ek al met die bosse langs koers gekry, terug na die Phelpse toe. Ek was haastig om sonder versuim my plan te begin uitvoer, want ek wou sorg dat Jim sy mond hou tot tyd en wyl die twee skelms vort was. Met hulle wou ek nie weer moeilikheid hê nie. Ek het genoeg gehad van hulle; nou wou ek heeltemal ontslae raak van hulle.

SECTION 32

When I got there it was all still and Sunday-like, and hot and sunshiny—the hands was gone to the fields; and there was them kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies in the air that makes it seem so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone; and if a breeze fans along and quivers the leaves, it makes you feel mournful, because you feel like it's spirits whispering—spirits that's been dead ever so many years—and you always think they're talking about *you*. As a general thing it makes a body wish *he* was dead, too, and done with it all.

Phelps's was one of these little one-horse cotton plantations^{e1}; and they all look alike. A rail fence round a two-acre yard; a stile, made out of logs sawed off and up-ended, in steps, like barrels of a different length, to climb over the fence with, and for the women to stand on when they are going to jump onto a horse; some sickly grass-patches in the big yard, but mostly it was bare and smooth, like an old hat with the nap rubbed off; big double log house for the white folks—hewed logs, with the chinks stopped up with mud or mortar, and these mud-stripes been whitewashed some time or another; round-log kitchen, with a big broad, open but roofed passage joining it to the house; log smoke-house back of the kitchen; three little log nigger-cabins in a row t'other side the smoke-house; one little hut all by itself away down against the back fence, and some out-buildings down a piece the other side; ash-hopper^{e2}, and big kettle to bile soap in, by the little hut; bench by the kitchen door, with bucket of

water and a gourd; hound asleep there, in the sun; more hounds asleep, round about; about three shade-trees away off in a corner; some currant bushes and gooseberry bushes in one place by the fence; outside of the fence a garden and a watermelon patch; then the cotton fields begins; and after the fields, the woods.

I went around and dumb over the back stile by the ash-hopper, and started for the kitchen. When I got a little ways, I heard the dim hum of a spinning-wheel wailing along up and sinking along down again; and then I knowed for certain I wished I was dead—for that *is* the lonesomest sound in the whole world^{e3}.

I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come; for I'd noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth, if I left it alone.

When I got half-way, first one hound and then another got up and went for me, and of course I stopped and faced them, and kept still. And such another pow-wow as they made! In a quarter of a minute I was a kind of a hub of a wheel, as you may say—spokes made out of dogs—circle of fifteen of them packed together around me, with their necks and noses stretched up towards me, a barking and howling; and more a coming; you could see them sailing over fences and around corners from everywhere.

A nigger woman come tearing out of the kitchen with a rolling-pin in her hand, singing out, "Begone! *you* Tige! you Spot! begone, sah!" and she fetched first one and

then another of them a clip and sent him howling, and then the rest followed; and the next second, half of them come back, wagging their tails around me and making friends with me. There ain't no harm in a hound, nohow.

And behind the woman comes a little nigger girl and two little nigger boys, without anything on but tow-linen shirts, and they hung onto their mother's gown, and peeped out from behind her at me, bashful, the way they always do. And here comes the white woman running from the house, about forty-five or fifty year old, bareheaded, and her spinning-stick in her hand; and behind her comes her little white children, acting the same way the little niggers was doing. She was smiling all over so she could hardly stand—and says:

“It's *you*, at last! —*ain't* it?”

I out with a “Yes'm,” before I thought.

She grabbed me and hugged me tight; and then gripped me by both hands and shook and shook; and the tears come in her eyes, and run down over; and she couldn't seem to hug and shake enough, and kept saying, “You don't look as much like your mother as I reckoned you would, but law sakes, I don't care for that, I'm so glad to see you! Dear, dear, it does seem like I could eat you up! Children, it's your cousin Tom! —tell him howdy.”

But they ducked their heads, and put their fingers in their mouths, and hid behind her. So she run on:

“Lize, hurry up and get him a hot breakfast, right away —or did you get your breakfast on the boat?”

I said I had got it on the boat. So then she started for the house, leading me by the hand, and the children tagging after. When we got there, she set me down in a split-bottomed chair, and set herself down on a little low stool in front of me, holding both of my hands, and says:

“Now I can have a *good* look at you: and laws-a-me, I’ve been hungry for it a many and a many a time, all these long years, and it’s come at last! We been expecting you a couple of days and more. What’s kep’ you?—boat get aground?”

“Yes’m—she——”

“Don’t say yes’m—say Aunt Sally. Where’d she get aground?”

I didn’t rightly know what to say, because I didn’t know whether the boat would be coming up the river or down. But I go a good deal on instinct; and my instinct said she would be coming up—from down towards Orleans. That didn’t help me much, though; for I didn’t know the names of bars down that way. I see I’d got to invent a bar, or forget the name of the one we got aground on—or—Now I struck an idea, and fetched it out:

“It warn’t the grounding—that didn’t keep us back but a little. We blowed out a cylinder-head.”

“Good gracious! anybody hurt?”

“No’m. Killed a nigger.”

“Well, it’s lucky; because sometimes people do get

hurt. Two years ago last Christmas, your uncle Silas was coming up from Newrleans on the old *Lally Rooke*⁴, and she blowed out a cylinder-head and crippled a man. And I think he died afterwards. He was a Babtist. Your uncle Silas knowed a family in Baton Rouge that knowed his people very well. Yes, I remember, now he *did* die. Mortification set in, and they had to amputate him. But it didn't save him. Yes, it was mortification—that was it. He turned blue all over, and died in the hope of a glorious resurrection. They say he was a sight to look at. Your uncle's been up to the town every day to fetch you. And he's gone again, not more'n an hour ago; he'll be back any minute, now. You must a met him on the road, didn't you?—oldish man, with a——”

“No, I didn't see nobody, Aunt Sally. The boat landed just at daylight, and I left my baggage on the wharf-boat and went looking around the town and out a piece in the country, to put in the time and not get here too soon; and so I come down the back way.”

“Who'd you give the baggage to?”

“Nobody.”

“Why, child, it'll be stole!”

“Not where I hid it I reckon it won't,” I says.

“How'd you get your breakfast so early on the boat?”

It was kinder thin ice, but I says:

“The captain see me standing around, and told me I better have something to eat before I went ashore; so

he took me in the texas to the officers' lunch, and give me all I wanted."

I was getting so uneasy I couldn't listen good. I had my mind on the children all the time; I wanted to get them out to one side, and pump them a little, and find out who I was. But I couldn't get no show, Mrs. Phelps kept it up and run on so. Pretty soon she made the cold chills streak all down my back, because she says:

"But here, we're a running on this way, and you hain't told me a word about Sis, nor any of them. Now I'll rest my works a little, and you start up yourn; just tell me *everything*—tell me all about 'm all—every one of 'm; and how they are, and what they're doing, and what they told you to tell me; and every last thing you can think of."

Well, I see I was up a stump—and up it good. Providence had stood by me this fur, all right, but I was hard and tight aground, now. I see it warn't a bit of use to try to go ahead—I'd *got* to throw up my hand. So I says to myself, here's another place where I got to resk the truth. I opened my mouth to begin; but she grabbed me and hustled me in behind the bed, and says:

"Here he comes! stick your head down lower—there, that'll do; you can't be seen, now. Don't you let on you're here. I'll play a joke on him. Children, don't you say a word."

I see I was in a fix, now. But it warn't no use to worry; there warn't nothing to do but just hold still, and try and be ready to stand from under when the lightning struck.

I had just one little glimpse of the old gentleman when he come in, then the bed hid him. Mrs. Phelps she jumps for him and says:

“Has he come?”

“No,” says her husband.

“Good-*ness* gracious!” she says, “what in the world *can* have become of him?”

“I can’t imagine,” says the old gentleman; “and I must say, it makes me dreadful uneasy.”

“Uneasy!” she says, “I’m ready to go distracted! He *must* a come; and you’ve missed him along the road. I *know* it’s so—something *tells* me so.”

“Why Sally, I *couldn’t* miss him along the road—you know that.”

“But oh, dear, dear, what *will* Sis say! He must a come! You must a missed him. He——”

“Oh, don’t distress me any more’n I’m already distressed. I don’t know what in the world to make of it. I’m at my wit’s end, and I don’t mind acknowledging ’t I’m right down scared. But there’s no hope that he’s come; for he *couldn’t* come and me miss him. Sally, it’s terrible—just terrible—something’s happened to the boat, sure^{e5}!”

“Why, Silas! Look yonder!—up the road!—ain’t that somebody coming?”

He sprung to the window at the head of the bed, and that give Mrs. Phelps the chance she wanted. She

stooped down quick, at the foot of the bed, and give me a pull, and out I come; and when he turned back from the window, there she stood, a-beaming and a-smiling like a house afire, and I standing pretty meek and sweaty alongside. The old gentleman stared, and says:

“Why, who’s that?”

“Who do you reckon ’t is?”ⁱ²⁸

“I haint no idea. Who *is* it?”

“It’s *Tom Sawyer!*”

By jings, I most slumped through the floor. But there warn’t no time to swap knives^{e6}; the old man grabbed me by the hand and shook, and kept on shaking; and all the time, how the woman did dance around and laugh and cry; and then how they both did fire off questions about Sid, and Mary, and the rest of the tribe.

But if they was joyful, it warn’t nothing to what I was; for it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was. Well, they froze to me for two hours; and at last when my chin was so tired it couldn’t hardly go, any more, I had told them more about my family—I mean the Sawyer family^{e7}—than ever happened to any six Sawyer families. And I explained all about how we blowed out a cylinder-head at the mouth of White River and it took us three days to fix it. Which was all right, and worked first rate; because *they* didn’t know but what it would take three days to fix it. If I’d a called it a bolt-head it would a done just as well.

Now I was feeling pretty comfortable all down one side, and pretty uncomfortable all up the other. Being Tom Sawyer was easy and comfortable; and it stayed easy and comfortable till by-and-by I hear a steamboat coughing along down the river—then I says to myself, spose Tom Sawyer come down on that boat?—and spose he steps in here, any minute, and sings out my name before I can throw him a wink to keep quiet? Well, I couldn't *have* it that way—it wouldn't do at all. I must go up the road and waylay him. So I told the folks I reckoned I would go up to the town and fetch down my baggage. The old gentleman was for going along with me, but I said no, I could drive the horse myself, and I druther he wouldn't take no trouble about me.

Chapter 32

Toe ek daar aankom was dit doodstil en nes

Sondag, en warm en die ene sonskyn—die werkers was vort lande toe; en die lug was vol van daardie dowwe soort gegons van kewe- tjies en vlieë wat die wêreld so 'n verlate plek laat lyk, asof almal dood en weg is; en as daar 'n windjie opsteek en die blare laat bibber, laat dit mens treurig voel omdat dit klink soos geeste wat daar aan die fluister is—geeste wat jare der jare al dood is—en dan dink jy mos altyd hulle is besig om oor *jou* te praat. Dit laat mens sommer wens dat jy ook dood was en dat dit uit en gedaan was met alles.

Phelps se plasie was een van daardie klein katoenplantasietjies wat deur net een perd bewerk word; hulle lyk mos almal eners. 'n Paaltjiesheining rondom 'n werf van een morg; 'n steggie van hout- stompe wat afgesaag en langs mekaar gestapel is soos vaatjies van verskillende grootte, waarmee mens oor die heining kan klim of waar die vroumense kan gaan staan as hulle op 'n perd se rug wil spring; 'n paar ylerige lappies gras op die werf, maar die grootste gedeelte daarvan is kaal en gelyk, soos 'n ou hoed waarvan die wollerigheid afgevyr we is; 'n dubbeldoorhouthuis vir die witmense—gekapte stompe, die skrewe toegestop met modder of sement, en op die een of ander tyd is dié modderstrepe dan wit geverf; 'n kombuis van ronde stompe met 'n groot breë oop afdak-gang wat dit met die huis verbind; 'n

houtrookhok agter die kombuis; en oorkant die rookhok drie klein houthutjies vir die negers, op 'n ry; doer teen die agterheining, heeltemal eenkant, nóg 'n houthut; 'n paar buitegeboue 'n entjie laer af aan die anderkant; 'n asbalie en 'n groot seepot by die klein hutjie; 'n bankie by die agterdeur, met 'n wateremmer en 'n karba daarby; 'n hond wat daar in die son lê en slaap; nog 'n paar ander honde wat sommer rond en bont lê en slaap; 'n stuk of drie skadubome doer eenkant in 'n hoek; 'n paar bessiebosse en appel- liefiebosse bymekaar teen die heining; anderkant die heining 'n tuin en 'n lappie waatlemoen; daaragter lê die katoenlande, en anderkant die lande, die bosse.

Ek het omgeloop en oor die steggie aan die agterkant oorgeklim, daar by die asbalie, en koers gekry kombuis toe. Toe ek so 'n entjie weg was, kon ek die dowwe gesoem van 'n spinwiel hoor wat al hoër en hoër snerp en dan weer laer sak; en toe weet ek baie seker dat ek wens ek was liewerster dood, want dis die allenigste geluid in die hele wye wêreld.

Ek het maar bly aanstryk, sonder enige vaste plan in my kop. Ek moes maar op die Voorsienigheid staatmaak om die regte woorde in my mond te lê as die tyd aanbreek; want ek het tevore al agter- gekom dat die Voorsienigheid my altyd die regte woorde gee as ek my nie daaraan steur nie.

Toe ek so halfpad kom, staan eers die een hond op en toe nog een en hulle bestorm my; en natuurlik steek ek toe net daar in my spore vas en kyk vir hulle en bly doodstil staan. En het hulle 'n kabaal op- geskop! Binne 'n kwartminuut was ek as't ware die naaf van 'n wiel —die honde die speke, seker 'n goeie vyftien van hulle in 'n kring daar rondom my, met koppe en neuse in my rigting uitgestrek, aan't blaf en tjank, terwyl daar nog altyd nuwes aankom—jy kon hulle van alkante af oor heinings en om hoeke sien aanstorm.

'n Negervrou kom met 'n rolstok in die hand by die kombuis uitgehardloop en skree: „Voertsek, Wagter! Spottie! Voertsek!” En sy haak af en slaat 'n paar van hulle dat hulle tjank-tjank daar weghol, met al die ander agterna; en net daarna kom die helfte van hulle toe terug, en swaai-swaai die sterte en begin maats maak. Vir 'n hond hoef mens tog nie bang te wees nie.

Agter die vrou verskyn daar 'n klein negermeidjie en twee klonkies, aldie net met growwe linnehempies aan, en hulle klou aan hulle ma se rok en loer skamerig van agter af uit, soos hulle maar altyd maak. En toe kom die witvrou ook van die huis af aangedraf—so 'n vyf-en- veertig, vyftig sou ek haar skat, sonder kappie, en met haar spinstok in die een hand. En agter haar kom haar klein witkindertjies aan en hulle maak nes die negertjies. Sy glimlag so breed dat sy amper haar balans verloor, en sý sê:

„Dis jý, uiteindelik! Of is dit nie?”

„Ja, mevrou,” stotter ek voor ek kon dink.

Sy kry my toe sommer beet en druk my teen haar vas, en toe gryp sy altwee my hande vas en begin dit aanmekaar te skud, en daar kom trane in haar oë en loop oor haar wange; en sy kry maar nie genoeg van omhels en druk en skud nie. En sy bly aanhou sê: „Jy lyk nie soveel soos jou ma soos ek

verwag het nie, maar jinnetjie, wat maak dit nou tog ook saak, nê? Ek is só bly om jou te sien. Ai tog, ek is skoon lus en eet jou op. Kinders, dis nou julle neef Tom. Sê vir horn dag.”

Maar hulle koes vinnig weg, druk hulle vingers in hulle monde en kruip agter haar rok in.

Toe gaan sy maar weer verder: „Liza, opskud, loop maak vir horn ’n lekker warm ontbyt. Of het jy op die boot geëet?”

Ek sê toe maar ek het klaar op die boot geëet. Toe maak sy aan- stalte terug huis se kant toe, my hand vasgevat in hare, met die kinders agterna. Toe ons binne kom, laat sy my op ’n riempiestoel sit en sy gaan self op ’n lae bankie voor my sit, hou nog altwee my hande vas, en sê:

„Laat ek jou nou ’n slag goed beskou. Jinnetjie, ek het al so hierna uitgesien, al dié jare, en nou’s jy eindelijk hier! Ons sit al ’n paar dae en wag dat jy moet kom. Wat het julle dan so opgehou ? Het die boot op ’n sandbank geloop?”

„Ja, mevrou, hy’t. . .”

„Moet tog nie vir my sê ja, mevrou nie, sê tant Sally. Waar’t hy op die sand geloop?”

Ek het nie mooi geweet wat om te antwoord nie, want ek wis mos nie of die boot stroom-op of stroom-af sou gekom het nie. Maar ek trek nogal taamlik peil op my instink, en dié’t my gesê dat die boot sekerlik stroom-óp sou gekom het, daar van New Orleans se kant af. Maar dit het my nog niks gehelp nie, want ek het nie die plekke se name só langes geken nie. Ek sou dus maar net ’n sandbank se naam uit my duim moes suig, of sê dat ek vergeet het op watter een ons gestrand het, of ... of... En toe kry ek ’n plan, en ek sê vin- nig:

„Dis nie die sandbank wat ons so lank opgehou het nie. Daar’t ’n silinder ontplof.”

„My goeiste! Iemand seergekry?”

„Nee, mevrou. Daar’s net ’n neger dood.”

„Nou, dis vir jou gelukkig, want partykeer kry iemand seer. Passeerde Krismis twee jaar terug het jou oom Silas mos van New Orleans af opgekom met die ou *Lally Rook* en dié’t ’n silinder laat ontplof en ’n man se been seergemaak. Ek dink hy’s dood daarna. Hy was ’n Wederdoper. Jou oom Silas het mense in Baton Rouge geken wat sý mense goed geken het. Ja, ek onthou nou, hy *is* dood daarna. Die ding het begin sleg word en toe moet hulle die been afsit. Maar dit het nie gehelp nie. Sleggeword, ja, dis wat gebeur het. Hy’t pot- blou geword en gesterwe in die hoop van ’n salige wederopstanding. Hulle sê dit was nou rêrig iets om te sien. Jou oom het elke liewe dag opgestap dorp toe om jou te gaan soek. Hy’s juis nou weer weg, skaars ’n uur gelede. Hy sal nou enige oomblik terug wees. Jy’t hom tog seker op die pad gekry, of hoe? ’n Ouerige man met ’n . . .” „Nee, ek het niemand gesien nie, tant Sally. Dit was net mooi dagbreek toe ons geland het en ek het my bagasie in die kaaiskuit gelos en toe ’n draai deur die dorp gemaak en ’n entjie in die

veld ingestap sodat ek darem nie té vroeg hier moet aankom nie; dis dié dat ek van agter af aangekom het.”

„Vir wie het jy jou bagasie gegee?”

„Niemand.”

„Maar my kind, dan gaan dit mos gesteel raak!”

„Nie waar ék dit weggesteek het nie,” antwoord ek.

„Hoe’t jy dan so vroeg al brekfis op die boot gekry?”

Die sakie het nou netelig begin lyk, maar ek antwoord: „Die kaptein het my daar gesien rondstaan en toe sê hy ek kan gerus iets eet voor ek aan wal gaan; toe’t hy my na die offisiere se eetkamer geneem en my laat eet net wat ek wou.”

Ek het nou so onrustig begin raak dat ek net nie meer mooi kon luister nie. Ek het die hele tyd aan die kinders bly dink: ek wou hulle graag ’n slag alleen bydam en uitvind wie ek eintlik is. Maar daar was net g’n kans nie. Mevrouw Phelps het net eenvoudig aanmekaar bly praat en praat. Sy laat my skielik koue rillings teen my rug af kry toe sy sê:

„Maar hier praat ék die hele tyd en jy’t my nog niks vertel van Sus en al die ander nie. Nou gaan ek bietjie stilbly dan praat jy weer ’n slag. Vertel my *alles*—alles van almal van hulle, die leste een. Hoe dit met hulle gaan, en wat hulle doen, en wat hulle vir jou gesê het om vir my te sê; alles, enigiets waar jy aan kan dink.”

Nou ja, daar sit ek toe behóórlik. Die Voorsienigheid het my tot nou toe goed oor die weg gehelp, maar nou was ek handeviervoet in die sop. Dit sou niks help om maar te probeer aankarring nie—ek moes maar liewerster tou opgooi. En ek dink: hier’s nou nóg ’n slag waar ek dit maar moet waag om die waarheid te praat. Ek maak my mond oop om te begin. Maar net toe kry sy my beet en spring met my agter die bed in en sê:

„Hier kom hy! Hou jou kop laer—so ja. Nou kan hy jou nie sien nie. Moenie hom laat agterkom dat jy hier is nie. Ek gaan hom ’n poets bak. Kinders, julle sê g’n woord nie, gehoor?”

Toe sit ek darem nou pens en pootjies in ’n gemors. Maar dit sou ook nie help om te knies daaroor nie; ek moes maar net doodstil bly sit en my reghou vir wanneer die weerlig my piets.

Ek kon die oubaas net ’n oomblikkie sien toe hy binnekom, toe kom die bed in die pad.

Mevrou Phelps hardloop na hom toe en vra: „Het hy gekom?”

„Nee,” antwoord haar man.

„My goeiste,” sê sy. „Wat op aarde kon dan tog van hom geword het?”

„Ek het g’n idee nie,” antwoord die oubaas. „En ek moet jou sê, dit laat my rêrigwaar onrustig voel.”

„Onrustig?” vra sy. „Ek voel ek kan iets oorkom. Hy móés gekom het; jy’t hom misgeloop op pad soontoe. Ek weet dis wat gebeur het. *lets* sê vir my so.”

„Maar Sally, ek kón hom tog nie misgeloop het nie. Jy weet dit tog self.”

„Ai, toggie, ai, en wat gaan Sus daarvan sê? Hy móés gekom het! Jy’t hom misgeloop. Hy . . .”

„Moet my tog nie meer omkrap as wat ek klaar is nie. Ek weet so waar nie wat om daarvan te dink nie. Ek is raadop. En ek sê jou reguit ek voel skrikkerig. Maar daar’s g’n hoop dat hy gekom het nie. Hy *kon* net nie. Ek sou hom mos nooit misgeloop het nie. Ag Sally, dis vreeslik, dis net te vreeslik. Daar moes iets met die boot gebeur het.”

„Haai, Silas, kyk net daar! Daar in die pad—is dit nie iemand wat daar aankom nie?”

Hy spring na die venster aan die koppenent van die bed en dis net die kans waarop mevrou Phelps gewag het. Sy buk vinnig by die voetenent en gee my ’n pluk, en uit is ek. En toe hy omdraai van die venster af, toe staan sy daar en glimlag en straal soos ’n huis wat brand, en ek staan druiptert en natgesweet langs haar.

Die oubaas gaap my aan, en vra toe:

„En wie’s dié?”

„Wie dink jy is dit?”

„Nee, ek weet g’n. Wie is dit?”

„Dis *Tom Sawyer!*”

Nou kyk, toe val ek amper dwarsdeur die vloer. Maar daar was nie kans om jis te sê nie; die oubaas kry my hand beet en begin dit te skud, en hy skud en hy skud; en al die tyd dans die vrou daar rond en huil en lag deurmekaar; en toe begin hulle my peper met vrae oor Sid en Mary en die ander.

As hulle bly was, dan was dit nog niks in vergelyking met wat *ék* was nie; dit het publiek gevoel asof ek van voor af gebore word. Ek was so bly om te weet wie ek is. Nou ja, twee uur lank het hulle my so uitgevra, totdat my ken te moeg was om te roer. Teen daardie tyd het ek hulle meer van my familie—ek bedoel die Sawyer-familie—vertel as wat daar nog ooit met *ses* Sawyer-families gebeur het. En ek het hulle met kleur en geur vertel hoe die silinder by die mond van die Witrivier ontplof het en hoe dit drie dae gekos het om die ding reg te maak. En dit was ook doodreg so, want vir al wat hulle weet, neem so iets drie dae. Ek kon netsowel gepraat het van ’n bout, dit sou vir hulle om’t ewe gewees het.

Nou ja, aan die een kant het ek nou heerlik gevoel, maar aan die ander kant deksels ongemaklik. Dit was alte lekker en maklik om Tom Sawyer te wees, en dit het lekker en maklik geblý ook, tot tyd en wyl ek ’n stoomboot in die rivier hoor optjokker. Toe dink ek skie-lik: sê nou Tom Sawyer kom met daardie boot? En sê nou hy kom sommer onverwags hier in en noem my op my naam voor ek vir hom kan beduie om sy mond te hou? Nee, dit kon net nie gebeur nie. Dit sou nie deug nie. Ek moes sorg dat ek by die pad kom en hom voorlê. Dus sê ek vir die mense ek wil teruggaan dorp toe om my bagasie te gaan haal. Die oubaas wou graag saamgaan, maar ek het daar ’n stokkie voorgestek: nee, sê ek, ek kan mos self met die karperd regkom, en ek wil

tog nie hê hulle moet gaan moeite maak vir my nie.

SECTION 33

So I started for town, in the wagon, and when I was half-way I see a wagon coming, and sure enough it was Tom Sawyer, and I stopped and waited till he come along. I says "Hold on!" and it stopped alongside, and his mouth opened up like a trunk, and staid so; and he swallowed two or three times like a person that's got a dry throat, and then says:

"I hain't ever done you no harm. You know that. So then, what you want to come back and ha'nt *me* for?"

I says:

"I hain't come back—I hain't been *gone*."

When he heard my voice, it righted him up some, but he warn't quite satisfied yet. He says:

"Don't you play nothing on me, because I wouldn't on you. Honest injun, now, you ain't a ghost?"

"Honest injun, I ain't," I says.

"Well—I—I—well, that ought to settle it, of course; but I can't somehow seem to understand it, no way. Looky here, warn't you ever murdered *at all*?"

"No. I warn't ever murdered at all—I played it on them. You come in here and feel of me if you don't believe me."

So he done it; and it satisfied him; and he was that glad to see me again, he didn't know what to do. And

he wanted to know all about it right off; because it was a grand adventure, and mysterious, and so it hit him where he lived. But I said, leave it alone till by-and-by; and told his driver to wait, and we drove off a little piece, and I told him the kind of a fix I was in, and what did he reckon we better do? He said, let him alone a minute, and don't disturb him. So he thought and thought, and pretty soon he says:

"It's all right, I've got it. Take my trunk in your wagon, and let on it's your'n; and you turn back and fool along slow, so as to get to the house about the time you ought to; and I'll go towards town a piece, and take a fresh start, and get there a quarter or a half an hour after you; and you needn't let on to know me, at first."

I says:

"All right; but wait a minute. There's one more thing—a thing that *nobody* don't know but me. And that is, there's a nigger here that I'm a trying to steal out of slavery—and his name is *Jim*—old Miss Watson's Jim."

He says:

"What! Why Jim is——"

He stopped and went to studying. I says:

"I know what you'll say. You'll say it's dirty low-down business; but what if it is?—I'm low down; and I'm agoing to steal him, and I want you to keep mum and not let on. Will you?"

His eye lit up, and he says:

“I’ll *help* you steal him!”

Well, I let go all holts then, like I was shot. It was the most astonishing speech I ever heard—and I’m bound to say Tom Sawyer fell, considerable, in my estimation. Only I couldn’t believe it. Tom Sawyer a *nigger stealer*!

“Oh, shucks,” I says, “you’re joking.”

“I ain’t joking, either.”

“Well, then,” I says, “joking or no joking, if you hear anything said about a runaway nigger, don’t forget to remember that *you* don’t know nothing about him, and *I* don’t know nothing about him.”

Then we took the trunk and put it in my wagon, and he drove off his way, and I drove mine. But of course I forgot all about driving slow, on accounts of being glad and full of thinking; so I got home a heap too quick for that length of a trip. The old gentleman was at the door, and he says:

“Why, this is wonderful. Who ever would a thought it was in that mare to do it. I wish we’d a timed her. And she hain’t sweated a hair—not a hair. It’s wonderful. Why, I wouldn’t take a hundred dollars for that horse now; I wouldn’t, honest; and yet I’d a sold her for fifteen before, and thought ’twas all she was worth.”

That’s all he said. He was the innocentest, best old soul I ever see. But it warn’t surprising; because he warn’t only just a farmer, he was a preacher, too, and had a little one-horse log church down back of the plantation, which he built it himself at his own expense,

for a church and school-house, and never charged nothing for his preaching, and it was worth it, too. There was plenty other farmer-preachers like that, and done the same way, down South.

In about half an hour Tom's wagon drove up to the front stile, and Aunt Sally she see it through the window because it was only about fifty yards, and says:

"Why, there's somebody come! I wonder who 'tis? Why, I do believe it's a stranger. Jimmy" (that's one of the children), "run and tell Lize to put on another plate for dinner."

Everybody made a rush for the front door, because, of course, a stranger don't come *every* year, and so he lays over the yaller fever, for interest, when he does come. Tom was over the stile and starting for the house; the wagon was spinning up the road for the village, and we was all bunched in the front door. Tom had his store clothes on, and an audience—and that was always nuts for Tom Sawyer. In them circumstances it warn't no trouble to him to throw in an amount of style that was suitable. He warn't a boy to meeky²⁸ along up that yard like a sheep; no, he come ca'm and important, like the ram. When he got afront of us, he lifts his hat ever so gracious and dainty, like it was the lid of a box that had butterflies asleep in it and he didn't want to disturb them, and says:

"Mr. Archibald Nichols, I presume?"

"No, my boy," says the old gentleman, "I'm sorry to say 't your driver has deceived you; Nichols's place is down a matter of three mile more. Come in, come in."

Tom he took a look back over his shoulder, and says, "Too late—he's out of sight."

"Yes, he's gone, my son, and you must come in and eat your dinner with us; and then we'll hitch up and take you down to Nichols's."

"Oh, I *can't* make you so much trouble; I couldn't think of it. I'll walk—I don't mind the distance."

"But we won't *let* you walk—it wouldn't be Southern hospitality to do it. Come right in."

"Oh, *do*," says Aunt Sally; "it ain't a bit of trouble to us, not a bit in the world. You *must* stay. It's a long, dusty three mile, and we *can't* let you walk. And besides, I've already told 'em to put on another plate, when I see you coming; so you mustn't disappoint us. Come right in, and make yourself at home."

So Tom he thanked them very hearty and handsome, and let himself be persuaded, and come in; and when he was in, he said he was a stranger from Hicksville, Ohio, and his name was William Thompson^{e1}—and he made another bow.

Well, he run on, and on, and on, making up stuff about Hicksville and everybody in it he could invent, and I getting a little nervous, and wondering how this was going to help me out of my scrape; and at last, still talking along, he reached over and kissed Aunt Sally right on the mouth, and then settled back again in his chair, comfortable, and was going on talking; but she jumped up and wiped it off with the back of her hand, and says:

"You owdacious puppy!"

He looked kind of hurt, and says:

"I'm surprised at you, m'am."

"You're s'rp—Why, what do you reckon / am? I've a good notion to take and—say, what do you mean by kissing me?"

He looked kind of humble, and says:

"I didn't mean nothing, m'am. I didn't mean no harm. I—I—thought you'd like it."

"Why, you born fool!" She took up the spinning-stick, and it looked like it was all she could do to keep from giving him a crack with it. "What made you think I'd like it?"

"Well, I don't know. Only, they—they—told me you would."

"*They* told you I would. Whoever told you 's *another* lunatic. I never heard the beat of it. Who's *they*?"

"Why—everybody. They all said so, m'am."

It was all she could do to hold in; and her eyes snapped, and her fingers worked like she wanted to scratch him; and she says:

"Who's 'everybody?' Out with their names—or ther'll be an idiot short."

He got up and looked distressed, and fumbled his hat, and says:

“I’m sorry, and I warn’t expecting it. They told me to. They all told me to. They all said kiss her; and said she’ll like it. They all said it—every one of them. But I’m sorry, m’am, and I won’t do it no more—I won’t, honest.”

“You won’t, won’t you? Well, I sh’d *reckon* you won’t!”

“No’m, I’m honest about it; I won’t ever do it again. Till you ask me.”

“Till I *ask* you! Well, I never see the beat of it in my born days! I lay you’ll be the Methusalem-numskulle^{e2} of creation before ever I ask you—or the likes of you.”

“Well,” he says, “it does surprise me so. I can’t make it out, somehow. They said you would, and I thought you would. But—” He stopped and looked around slow, like he wished he could run across a friendly eye, somewhere’s; and fetched up on the old gentleman’s, and says, “Didn’t *you* think she’d like me to kiss her, sir?”

“Why, no, I—I—well, no, I b’lieve I didn’t.”

Then he looks on around, the same way, to me—and says:

“Tom, didn’t *you* think Aunt Sally ’d open out her arms and say, ‘Sid Sawyer^{e3}——’”

“My land!” she says, breaking in and jumping for him, “you impudent young rascal, to fool a body so—” and was going to hug him, but he fended her off, and says:

“No, not till you’ve asked me, first.”

So she didn't lose no time, but asked him; and hugged him and kissed him, over and over again, and then turned him over to the old man, and he took what was left. And after they got a little quiet again, she says:

"Why, dear me, I never see such a surprise. We warn't looking for *you*, at all, but only Tom. Sis never wrote to me about anybody coming but him."

"It's because it warn't *intended* for any of us to come but Tom," he says; "but I begged and begged, and at the last minute she let me come, too; so, coming down the river, me and Tom thought it would be a first-rate surprise for him to come here to the house first, and for me to by-and-by tag along and drop in and let on to be a stranger. But it was a mistake, Aunt Sally. This ain't no healthy place for a stranger to come."

"No—not impudent whelps, Sid. You ought to had your jaws boxed; I hain't been so put out since I don't know when. But I don't care, I don't mind the terms—I'd be willing to stand a thousand such jokes to have you here. Well, to think of that performance! I don't deny it, I was most putrified^{e4} with astonishment when you give me that smack."

We had dinner out in that broad open passage betwixt the house and the kitchen; and there was things enough on that table for seven families—and all hot, too; none of your flabby tough meat that's laid in a cupboard in a damp cellar all night and tastes like a hunk of old cold cannibal in the morning. Uncle Silas he asked a pretty long blessing over it, but it was worth it; and it didn't cool it a bit, neither, the way I've seen them kind of interruptions do, lots of times.

There was a considerable good deal of talk, all the afternoon, and me and Tom was on the lookout all the time, but it warn't no use, they didn't happen to say nothing about any runaway nigger, and we was afraid to try to work up to it. But at supper, at night, one of the little boys says:

“Pa, mayn't Tom and Sid and me go to the show?”

“No,” says the old man, “I reckon there ain't going to be any; and you couldn't go if there was; because the runaway nigger told Burton and me all about that scandalous show, and Burton said he would tell the people; so I reckon they've drove the owdacious loafers out of town before this time.”

So there it was!—but I couldn't help it. Tom and me was to sleep in the same room and bed; so, being tired, we bid goodnight and went up to bed, right after supper, and clumb out of the window and down the lightning-rod^{e5}, and shoved for the town; for I didn't believe anybody was going to give the king and the duke a hint, and so, if I didn't hurry up and give them one they'd get into trouble sure.

On the road Tom he told me all about how it was reckoned I was murdered, and how pap disappeared, pretty soon, and didn't come back no more, and what a stir there was when Jim run away; and I told Tom all about our Royal Nonesuch rascallions, and as much of the raft-voyage as I had time to; and as we struck into the town and up through the middle of it—it was as much as half-after eight, then—here comes a raging rush of people, with torches, and an awful whooping and yelling, and banging tin pans and blowing horns:

and we jumped to one side to let them go by; and as they went by, I see they had the king and the duke astraddle of a railⁱ²⁹—that is, I knowed it was the king and the duke, though they was all over tar and feathers, and didn't look like nothing in the world that was human—just looked like a couple of monstrous big soldier-plumes. Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals^{e6}, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another.

We see we was too late—couldn't do no good. We asked some stragglers about it, and they said everybody went to the show looking very innocent; and laid low and kept dark till the poor old king was in the middle of his cavortings on the stage; then somebody give a signal, and the house rose up and went for them.

So we poked along back home, and I warn't feeling so brash as I was before, but kind of ornery, and humble, and to blame, somehow—though I hadn't done nothing. But that's always the way; it don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense^{e7}, and just goes for him *anyway*. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know no more than a person's conscience does, I would pison him. It takes up more room than all the rest of a person's insides, and yet ain't no good, nohow. Tom Sawyer he says the same.

Ek val dus in die pad dorp toe, op die perdekar.

En halfpad sien ek 'n ander kar aankom—en sowaar, daar sit Tom Sawyer toe ook. Ek hou stil en wag tot hy by my is. Toe roep ek: „Hokaai!” en die kar kom langs myne tot stilstand, en hy maak sy mond soos 'n koffer oop en hóú dit so; en hy sluk 'n paar slae soos iemand met 'n droe keel, en toe sê hy:

„Ek het jou nooit iets gedoen nie. Jy weet dit. Vir wat kom jy dan nou terug om by my te kom spook?”

„Ek het g'n teruggekom nie,” antwoord ek. „Ek was nooit *weg* nie.”

Toe hy my stem hoor, het dit hom bietjie beter laat voel, maar hy was nog ver van tevrede af. En hy vra: „Moet nou nie vir my iets doen nie, want ek sal niks vir jóú doen nie. Sê my op jou erewoord: is jy 'n spook of nie?”

„Op my erewoord ek is nie,” antwoord ek.

„Nou ja dan, ek . . . ek ... jy sien ... wel, ek skat dis dan orraait, maar ek verstaan daar nog niks van nie. Kyk hier, was jy dan *glad nie* vermoor nie?”

„Nee, glad nie. Dit was sommer 'n streep wat ek hulle getrek het. Kom voel aan my as jy my nie glo nie.”

Hy kom maak toe so, en dít stel hom eindelijk gerus; en hy was so bly om my weer te sien dat hy nie weet wát om te doen nie. Hy wou ook sommer dadelik die hele storie hoor, want dit was 'n wonderlike avontuur vol geheime, en sulke dinge was mos sy kos. Maar ek sê nee, dit moet wag vir later. En ek laat eers sy drywer 'n rukkie daar wag sodat ons twee 'n entjie tru kan ry, want ek wil hom vertel van die penarie waarin ek sit en raad hê oor hoe om daar uit te kom. Hy sit 'n ruk lank, en nadink, en toe sê hy:

„Skote, ek het dit. Laai my koffer op jou wa en maak of dit joune is. Draai dan om en ry op jou tyd terug, sodat jy omtrent net op die regte tyd weer by die huis aankom. Dan gaan ek solank weer 'n ent terug dorp se kant toe, en val van voor af in die pad. So 'n kwartier of 'n halfuur ná jou kom ek dan daar aan, en jy hoef aan die begin glad nie te wys dat jy my ken nie.”

„Goed,” sê ek. „Maar luister nou eers. Daar's nog iets: iets wat *net* ek weet. En dit is: hulle't 'n neger daar wat ek wil steel om hom vry te maak. Sy naam is *Jim*—ou juffrou Watson se Jim.”

„Wat?” roep hy uit. „Maar Jim is . . .” Hy hou op met praat en begin weer nadink.

„Toe maar,” sê ek. „Ek weet wat jy wil sê. Jy sal sê dis 'n lae, gemene besigheid. Maar wat daarvan ? Ek *is* laag en gemeen, en ek gaan hom steel, en ek wil hê jy moet jou mond hou en hulle niks laat agterkom nie. Sal jy?”

Dadelik kom daar lig in sy oë en hy sê: „Ek sal jou help om hom te steel!”

Jy kon my netsowel daar in my spore platgeskiet het. Dit was die grootste verrassing wat ek nog ooit aangehoor het—en ek moet sê, dit het Tom Sawyer heelwat in my oë laat daal. Ek kon dit net nie glo nie. Tom Sawyer 'n *negerdief!*

„Ag toe nou,” sê ek. „Nou maak jy sommer grappies.”

„Ek maak g'n grappies nie.”

„Nou toe dan,” antwoord ek. „Grappies of nie grappies nie, moenie vergeet om te onthou nie: as jy ooit enigiets hoor oor ’n wegloopneger, dan weet jy *niks* van hom af nie, en ek weet óók niks!”

Toe laai ons sy koffer oor op my wa en hy kry sy koers, en ek myne. Maar natuurlik was ek so bly en vol gedagtes dat ek skoon vergeet het om stadig te ry, en toe kom ek veels te vroeg vir so ’n lang rit by die huis terug.

Die oubaas het my op die drumpel gestaan en inwag, en gesê: „Maar dís wonderlik. Wie sou nou kon dink die ou merrie kan dít doen ? Ek wens ons het haar tyd gevat. En daar’s nie ’n haar op haar lyf natgesweet nie, nie ’n inkelte haar nie! Wonderlik. Goeiste, hulle kan my nou ’n honderd dollars vir daardie perd aanbied, ek sal dit nie vat nie, sowaar nie—en vroeër sou ek haar vir vyftien verkoop het en gedink het sy’s ook niks meer werd nie!”

Dis ook al wat hy gesê het. Hy was die onskuldigste, dierbaarste ou siel wat jy jou kan voorstel. Maar dit was ook nie te verwonder nie, want hy was nie net ’n boer nie: hy was ’n predikant boonop en hy’t doer agter sy plantasie ’n ou eenperdkerkie gehad wat hy self laat bou het en wat hy vir ’n kerk en ’n skooltjie gebruik het. Vir sy preke het hy nooit iets gevra nie, en hulle was dit werd ook. Daar in die suide was daar heelwat sulke boerepredikante.

Omtrent ’n halfuur later hou Tom se wa by die voorste steggie stil, en tant Sally gewaar dit deur die venster—dit was skaars vyftig tree daarvandaan. Dadelik roep sy:

„Haai, hier’s mense! Ek wonder wie dit kan wees? My jinne tog, dit lyk na ’n vreemdeling. Jimmy (dis een van die kinders) hardloop jy en gaan sê vir Liza sy moet nog ’n plek dek vir ete.”

Almal storm voordeur toe, want hierlangs sien mens mos darem nie elke jaar vreemdelinge nie, en as daar wel een opdaag, is dit genoeg om die mense geelsug te gee van skone opgewondenheid. Teen dié tyd was Tom al oor die steg en op pad huis toe; die kar was besig om ’n es te gooi om terug te ry dorp toe, en ons het almal daar in die voordeur saamgedrom. Tom het sy winkelklere aangehad. En daarby was daar ’n gehoor voor hom, iets wat so mooi in sy kraam pas. By sulke geleenthede was dit vir hom glad nie moeilik om ’n ding so piekfyn as moontlik te doen nie. Moenie dink dis ’n *seun* wat so mak soos ’n lammetjie hier na die huis toe aangestap kom nie, o nee: hy loop so waardig en belangrik soos ’n óú ram. En toe hy voor ons kom, haal hy sy hoed so ewe deftig en fyntjies af asof dit die deksel van ’n boks is met ’n klomp slapende skoenlappers daarin wat hy nie wil hinder nie, en hy sê: „Mnr. Archibald Nichols, nie waar nie?” „Nee, boet,” sê die oubaas. „Dit spyt my, maar daardie drywer moes jou verkul het. Nichols se plaas lê nog ’n stuk of drie myl laer af.”

Tom loer oor sy skouer en sê: „Te laat. Hy’s al weg.”

„Ja, hy’s weg, my boet. Nou moet jy maar inkom en saam met ons kom aansit. Dan kan ons inspan en jou na Nichols toe neem.”

„Ek kan julle nog nooit soveel moeite aandoen nie, nooit! Nee, ek sal stap. Ek gee nie om nie.”

„Maar ons sal jou nog nooit laat stap nie. Dis nie die soort gas- vryheid wat ons hier in die suide ken nie. Kom tog binne.”

„Asseblieftog,” sê tant Sally ook. „Dis rêrig nie vir ons moeite nie, niks. Jy móét eers oorbly. Daar lê ’n lang, stowwerige drie myl voor en ons kan jou nooit toelaat om te stap nie. Buitendien, ek het hulle al klaar nog ’n plek laat dek toe ek jou sien aankom. Jy mag ons nie nou teleurstel nie. Kom binne en maak jou tuis.”

Tom bedank hulle hartlik en danig beleefd en hy laat hulle maar begaan en kom binne; en toe hy binne is, sê hy hy’s ’n vreemdeling van Hicksville in Ohio, en sy naam is William Thompson, en toe buig hy weer ’n slag.

Hy hou toe maar aan en aan, en hy suig ’n hele spul goed oor Hicksville uit sy duim, en oor al die mense aan wie hy kan dink, en intussen begin ek bekommerd raak en wonder hoe hy my ooit uit my penarie uit gaan help. Toe, eindelijk, terwyl hy nog kliphard aan die vertel is, leun hy skielik vorentoe en hy soen tant Sally vol op die mond, en toe sit hy weer gemaklik agteroor op sy stoel en wil ewe luiters aangaan met praat. Maar sy spring daar op en vee haar mond met ’n handrug af en roep uit:

„Jou astrante vent!”

Hy lyk half seergemaak, en sê: „Maar nou verbaas mevrou my regtig.”

„Nou verb . . . Kyk hier, wat dink jy miskien is ék ? Ek is baie lus en . . . Vir wat staan en soen jy my?”

Hy hou horn baie bedeesd en sê: „Ek het daar regtig niks mee bedoel nie, mevrou. Ek wou nie aanstoot gee nie. Ek . . . ek het net gedink u sal daarvan hou.”

„Jou klein swaap!” Sy tel haar spinstok op en mens kan sien sy moet haar inhou om horn nie daarmee toe te takel nie. „Wat het jou miskien laat dink ek sal daarvan hou ?”

„Ek weet nie. Dis net . . . hulle . . . hulle het my gesê u sal.” „*Hulle* het vir jou gesê ek sal! Wie dit ookal vir jou gesê het, is net so mal soos jy! Ek het nog nooit sowat gehoor nie. Wie is *hulle* miskien ?”

„Dis . . . wel, almal. Hulle’t almal so gesê, mevrou.”

Toe moet sy knyp om haar in te hou. En haar oë blits en haar vingers kiewel-kiewel asof sy hom wil krap, en sy sê:

„Wie’s ,*almal*’? Toe, ek wil hulle name hoor. Anders is daar nou- noutjies een malle minder op die wêreld.”

Hy staan op en lyk skoon verbouereerd en staan en frommel sy hoed, en sê: „Ek is jammer. Ek het dit regtig nie verwag nie. Hulle het gesê ek moet. Hulle’t my *almal* gesê ek moet. Hulle’t almal gesê: Soen haar, sy hou daarvan. Dis wat hulle gesê het, die laaste een van hulle. Maar ek is bitter jammer, mevrou, ek sal dit nooit weer doen nie. Regtigwaar, ek sal nie.”

„O jy sal nie, he? Ek sou so *reken*!”

„Nee, mevrou, eerlikwaar. Ek sal nie weer nie. Nie voor u my self vra nie.”

„Nie voor ek jou *vra* nie! Ek het in my lewensdag nog nooit sowat gehoor

nie! Laat ek nou maar vir jou sê: jy sal ouer as Metusalem moet word voor ek vir jou of een van jou soort vra om my te soen!” „Nou toe nou,” sê hy. „Ek is regtig stom verbaas. Ek kan dit net nie verstaan nie. Hulle’t gesê u sal, en ek het self ook gedink u sou. Maar . . .” Hy bly stil en begin stadig rondkyk asof hy hoop dat hy darem êrens ’n vriendelike gesig sal sien; en toe gewaar hy die oubaas en hy vra: „Het u nie self gedink sy sou daarvan hou om my te soen nie?”

„Wel, nee . . . ek . . . ek . . . nee, ek skat nie ek het so gedink nie.”

Toe kyk hy verder, nog steeds op dieselfde manier, en sy oë val op my, en hy vra: „Tom, ek is seker jý het gedink tant Sally sal haar arms oopgooi en sê: „Sid Sawyer . . .”

„My jinnetjie!” sê sy tussenbeide en bestorm hom. „Jou klein astant om mens so vir die gek te hou . . .” En sy wil hom net om- hels, maar hy hou haar op ’n afstand en sê:

„O nee. Nie voor tante my gevra het nie.”

Sy vra sommer dadelik en begin hom soen en omhels, oor en oor, en toe gee sy hom vir die oubaas aan en hy vat wat oorbly. En toe hulle nou eindelik weer ’n bietjie bedaar het, sê sy:

„Nou kyk nou, so ’n verrassing het ek nog nooit gehad nie. Ons het jón glad nie verwag nie, net vir Tom. Sus het my nooit geskryf dat iemand anders met hom saamkom nie.”

„Dis omdat die *plan* was dat net Tom sou kom,” sê hy. „Maar ek het aangehou en aangehou en op die laaste oomblik het sy my ook maar laat kom. En op pad het ek en Tom gedink dit sal ’n alte gawe verrassing wees as hy eers hiematoe kom, en ek dan later, asof ek ’n vreemdeling is. Maar ek sien nou ons was verkeerd, tant Sally. Dis nie ’n gesonde pick vir ’n vreemdeling om sy neus te wys nie.”

„Nie as hy ’n astante klein snuiter is nie, Sid. Jy moes eintlik ’n oorveeg gekry het; ek kan nie onthou wanneer ek laas in so ’n ver- leentheid was nie. Maar ek gee nie om nie. Ek verdra maklik ’n duisend sulke grappe net om jou hier te hê. Gits, maar dink net aan die gedoente! Ek sê jou reguit, ek was skoon lam van verbasing toe jy my daar bydam.”

Ons het buite onder die breë afdak tussen die kombuis en die huis geëet, en daardie tafel het genoeg kos vir sewe gesinne op hom gehad—en alles warm daarby. G’n hompe taai vleis wat heelnaag êrens in ’n kas in ’n klam kelder gelê het en die volgende dag smaak soos ’n stuk koue kannibaal nie. Oom Silas het ’n hele lang seën daarvoor gevra, maar dit was die moeite werd, en dit het die kos nie eens laat koud word soos wat sulke onderbrekings baie slae maak nie.

Die hele middag deur het ons gesit en praat en ek en Tom was die hele tyd op ons hoede, maar dit was pure verniet, want hulle het nooit iets gesê oor ’n wegloopslaaf nie, en ons was skrikkerig om self in daardie rigting te praat.

Maar met etenstyd die aand vra een van die seuntjies toe: „Pa, kan ek en Tom en Sid na die konsert toe gaan?”

„Nee,” antwoord die oubaas. „Ek glo nie daar gaan ’n konsert wees nie; en al wás daar, dan kon julle in elk geval nie gaan nie, want die wegloopslaaf het vir my en Burton alles van daardie skandalige konsert vertel en Burton het gesê hy gaan sorg dat die ander mense almal daarvan hoor—so ek skat hulle’t daardie aстранte leeglêers teen die tyd al lankal uit die dorp uitgeja.”

Dis dan hoe die saak gestaan het!—maar dit was nie *my* skuld nie. Ek en Tom moes in dieselfde kamer slaap, op een bed. Omdat ons moeg was, het ons toe maar nag gesê en net na ete kamer toe gegaan, by die venster uitgeklim, teen die weerligafleier afgeseil en begin aanstryk dorp toe. Want ek het nie gedink iemand gaan die koning en die hertog ’n snuf in die neus laat kry nie; as ek dus nie opskud en hulle waarsku nie, dan gaan hulle turf vanaand sit.

Onderweg vertel Tom my hoe hy gedink het dat ek vermoor was, en hoe Pa kort daarna verdwyn het en nog nie weer teruggekom het nie, en watter bohaai daat was toe Jim weggeloop het; en ek vertel hóm van die skelms en hulle Weergalose Majesteit en iets van die vaart op die vlot ook. Ek was nog daarmee besig, toe ons in die dorp aankom. Dit was toe net so teen halfnege. En hier gewaar ons skielik ’n norring mense aankom met fakkels en ’n geskree en ’n gedruis, en hulle slaan blikpanne teenmekaar en blaas op fluite; en ons staan vinnig opsy sodat hulle kan verbykom; en so met die verbykom sien ek die koning en die hertog wydsbeen oor ’n paal sit. Ek bedoel nou: ek het *geweet* dit was die koning en die hertog, want hulle was be- smeer van teer en vere en het glad nie juis na mense gelyk nie—eerder na twee van die groot pluime wat mens op helms kry. Dit het my skoon naar laat voel toe ek dit sien; en ek was jammer vir daardie armsalige twee skelms, want dit was of ek net g’n kwaai gevoelens meer teen hulle kon he nie. Dit was ’n aaklige affêre om te aanskou. Mense kan rêrig bitterlik wreed wees met mekaar.

Ons was dus te laat—ons kon daar niks meer aan doen nie. Ons het ’n paar van die agterstes uitgevra, en hulle’t ons vertel dat almal kamma doodonskuldig na die vertoning toe is; en hulle het alles dig gehou totdat die arme ou koning in die middel van sy kapperjolle op die verhoog was; toe’t iemand ’n teken gegee en die hele saal het opgespring en hulle bestorm.

Toe is ons maar weer terug huis toe en ek het glad nie meer so vrolik as tevore gevoel nie; eerder taamlik oes en druiptert, en ál asof dit my skuld was—al het *ek* tog niks gedoen nie. Maar so gaan dit mos altyd. Dit maak nie saak of mens reg of verkeerd doen nie, jou gewete gebruik nie sy kop nie—hy sukkel áltyd met jou. As ek ’n lafhartige hond gehad het wat nes mens se gewete was, dan’t ek horn gif gevoer. Dit vat meer plek as al jou ander binnegoed in jou lyf, en tog help dit jou niks. En Tom Sawyer sê ook so.

SECTION 34

We stopped talking, and got to thinking.

By-and-by Tom says:

“Looky here, Huck, what fools we are, to not think of it before! I bet I know where Jim is.”

“No! Where?”

“In that hut down by the ash-hopper. Why, looky here. When we was at dinner, didn’t you see a nigger man go in there with some vittles?”

“Yes.”

“What did you think the vittles was for?”

“For a dog.”

“So’d I. Well, it wasn’t for a dog.”

“Why?”

“Because part of it was watermelon.”

“So it was—I noticed it. Well, it does beat all, that I never thought about a dog not eating watermelon. It shows how a body can see and don’t see at the same time,”

“Well, the nigger unlocked the padlock when he went in, and he locked it again when he come out. He fetched uncle a key, about the time we got up from table—same key, I bet. Watermelon shows man, lock

shows prisoner; and it ain't likely there's two prisoners on such a little plantation, and where the people's all so kind and good. Jim's the prisoner. All right—I'm glad we found it out detective fashion; I wouldn't give shucks for any other way. Now you work your mind and study out a plan to steal Jim, and I will study out one, too; and we'll take the one we like the best."

What a head for just a boy to have! If I had Tom Sawyer's head, I wouldn't trade it off to be a duke, nor mate of a steamboat, nor clown in a circus, nor nothing I can think of. I went to thinking out a plan, but only just to be doing something; I knowed very well where the right plan was going to come from. Pretty soon, Tom says:

"Ready?"

"Yes," I says.

"All right—bring it out."

"My plan is this," I says. "We can easy find out if it's Jim in there. Then get up my canoe to-morrow night, and fetch my raft over from the island. Then the first dark night that comes, steal the key out of the old man's britches, after he goes to bed, and shove off down the river on the raft, with Jim, hiding daytimes and running nights, the way me and Jim used to do before. Wouldn't that plan work?"

"*Work?* Why cert'nly, it would work, like rats a fighting. But it's too blame' simple; there ain't nothing *to* it. What's the good of a plan that ain't no more trouble than that? It's as mild as goose-milk. Why, Huck, it wouldn't make no more talk than breaking into a soap

factory.”

I never said nothing, because I warn't expecting nothing different; but I knowed mighty well that whenever he got *his* plan ready it wouldn't have none of them objections to it.

And it didn't. He told me what it was, and I see in a minute it was worth fifteen of mine, for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides. So I was satisfied, and said we would waltz in on it. I needn't tell what it was, here, because I knowed it wouldn't stay the way it was. I knowed he would be changing it around, every which way, as we went along, and heaving in new bullinesses wherever he got a chance. And that is what he done.

Well, one thing was dead sure; and that was, that Tom Sawyer was in earnest and was actuly going to help steal that nigger out of slavery. That was the thing that was too many for me. Here was a boy that was respectable, and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind; and yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. I *couldn't* understand it, no way at all. It was outrageous, and I knowed I ought to just up and tell him so; and so be his true friend, and let him quit the thing right where he was, and save himself. And I *did* start to tell him; but he shut me up, and says:

“Don’t you reckon I know what I’m about? Don’t I generly know what I’m about?”

“Yes.”

“Didn’t I say I was going to help steal the nigger?”

“Yes.”

“*Well* then.”

That’s all he said, and that’s all I said. It warn’t no use to say any more; because when he said he’d do a thing, he always done it. But I couldn’t make out how he was willing to go into this thing; so I just let it go, and never bothered no more about it. If he was bound to have it so, I couldn’t help it.

When we got home, the house was all dark and still; so we went on down to the hut by the ash-hopper, for to examine it. We went through the yard, so as to see what the hounds would do. They knowed us, and didn’t make no more noise than country dogs is always doing when anything comes by in the night. When we got to the cabin, we took a look at the front and the two sides; and on the side I warn’t acquainted with—which was the north side—we found a square window-hole, up tolerable high, with just one stout board nailed across it. I says:

“Here’s the ticket. This hole’s big enough for Jim to get through, if we wrench off the board.”

Tom says:

“It’s as simple as tit-tat-toe, three-in-a-row, and as easy as playing hooky. I should *hope* we can find a

way that's a little more complicated than *that*, Huck Finn."

"Well then," I says, "how'll it do to saw him out, the way I done before I was murdered, that time?"

"That's more *like*," he says. "It's real mysterious, and troublesome, and good," he says; "but I bet we can find a way that's twice as long. There ain't no hurry; le's keep on looking around."

Betwixt the hut and the fence, on the back side, was a lean-to, that joined the hut at the eaves, and was made out of plank. It was as long as the hut, but narrow—only about six foot wide. The door to it was at the south end, and was padlocked. Tom he went to the soap kettle, and searched around and fetched back the iron thing they lift the lid with; so he took it and prized out one of the staples. The chain fell down, and we opened the door and went in, and shut it, and struck a match, and see the shed was only built against the cabin and hadn't no connection with it; and there warn't no floor to the shed, nor nothing in it but some old rusty played-out hoes, and spades, and picks, and a crippled plow. The match went out, and so did we, and shoved in the staple again, and the door was locked as good as ever. Tom was joyful. He says:

"Now we're all right. We'll *dig* him out. It'll take about a week!"

Then we started for the house, and I went in the back door—you only have to pull a buckskin latch-string, they don't fasten the doors—but that warn't romantical enough for Tom Sawyer: no way would do him but he must climb up the lightning-rod. But after he got up

half-way about three times, and missed fire and fell every time, and the last time most busted his brains out, he thought he'd got to give it up; but after he was rested, he allowed he would give her one more turn for luck, and this time he made the trip.

In the morning we was up at break of day, and down to the nigger cabins to pet the dogs and make friends with the nigger that fed Jim—if it *was* Jim that was being fed. The niggers was just getting through breakfast and starting for the fields; and Jim's nigger was piling up a tin pan with bread and meat and things; and whilst the others was leaving, the key come from the house.

This nigger had a good-natured, chuckle-headed face, and his wool was all tied up in little bunches with thread. That was to keep witches off. He said the witches was pestering him awful, these nights, and making him see all kinds of strange things, and hear all kinds of strange words and noises, and he didn't believe he was ever witched so long, before, in his life. He got so worked up, and got to running on so about his troubles, he forgot all about what he'd been agoing to do. So Tom says:

“What's the vittles for? Going to feed the dogs?”

The nigger kind of smiled around graduly over his face, like when you heave a brickbat in a mud puddle, and he says:

“Yes, Mars Sid, a dog. Cur'us dog, too. Does you want to go en look at 'im?”

“Yes.”

I hunched Tom, and whispers:

“You going, right here in the day-break? *That* warn’t the plan.”

“No, it warn’t—but it’s the plan *now*.”

So, drat him, we went along, but I didn’t like it much. When we got in, we couldn’t hardly see anything, it was so dark; but Jim was there, sure enough, and could see us; and he sings out:

“Why, *Huck!* En good *lan’!* ain’ dat Misto Tom?”

I just knowed how it would be; I just expected it. *I* didn’t know nothing to do; and if I had, I couldn’t a done it; because that nigger busted in and says:

“Why, de gracious sakes! do he know you genlmen?”

We could see pretty well, now. Tom he looked at the nigger, steady and kind of wondering, and says:

“Does *who* know us?”

“Why, dish-yer runaway nigger.”

“I don’t reckon he does; but what put that into your head?”

“What *put* it dar? Didn’ he jis’ dis minute sing out like he knowed you?”

Tom says, in a puzzled-up kind of way:

“Well, that’s mighty curious. *Who* sung out? *When* did he sing out? *What* did he sing out?” And turns to me, perfectly c’am, and says, “Did *you* hear anybody sing

out?"

Of course there warn't nothing to be said but the one thing; so I says:

"No; / ain't heard nobody say nothing."

Then he turns to Jim, and looks him over like he never see him before; and says:

"Did you sing out?"

"No, sah," says Jim; "/ hain't said nothing, sah."

"Not a word?"

"No, sah, I hain't said a word."

"Did you ever see us before?"

"No, sah; not as / knows on."

So Tom turns to the nigger, which was looking wild and distressed, and says, kind of severe:

"What do you reckon's the matter with you, anyway? What made you think somebody sung out?"

"Oh, it's de dad-blame' witches, sah, en I wisht I was dead, I do. Dey's awluz at it, sah, en dey do mos' kill me, dey sk'yers me so. Please to don't tell nobody 'bout it sah, er ole Mars Silas he'll scole me; 'kase he say dey *ain't* no witches. I jis' wish to goodness he was heah now—*den* what would he say! I jis' bet he couldn' fine no way to git aroun' it *dis* time. But it's awluz jis' so; people dat's *sot*, stays sot; dey won't look into nothin' en fine it out f'r deyselves, en when *you* fine it out en tell um 'bout it, dey doan' b'lieve you."

Tom give him a dime, and said we wouldn't tell nobody; and told him to buy some more thread to tie up his wool with; and then looks at Jim, and says:

"I wonder if Uncle Silas is going to hang this nigger. If I was to catch a nigger that was ungrateful enough to run away, I wouldn't give him up, I'd hang him." And whilst the nigger stepped to the door to look at the dime and bite it to see if it was good, he whispers to Jim, and says:

"Don't ever let on to know us. And if you hear any digging going on nights, it's us: we're going to set you free."

Jim only had time to grab us by the hand and squeeze it, then the nigger come back, and we said we'd come again some time if the nigger wanted us to; and he said he would, more particular if it was dark, because the witches went for him mostly in the dark, and it was good to have folks around then.

Chapter 34

Ons het opgehou met praat, en begin dink. En na 'n rukkie sê Tom skielik: „Hene, Huck, ons is darem onnosel. Hoekom het ons nog nie daaraan gedink nie? Ek wed jou ek weet waar Jim is!”

„Nooit! Waar?”

„In daardie hut daar by die asbalie. Kyk: het jy nie vanmiddag toe ons aan die eet was, gesien daar loop 'n slaaf met kos soontoe nie?” „Ja.”

„En waarvoor het jy gedink was daardie kos?”

„Vir 'n hond.”

„Ek ook. Maar ek sê jou dit was nie vir 'n hond nie.”

„Hoekom nie?”

„Want daar was waatlemoen daarby.”

„Sowaar ja—ek het dit opgelet. Nou toe nou, ek het nooit eers daaraan

gedink dat 'n hond nie waatlemoen eet nie. Dit wys jou nou net hoe mens dinge kan sien sonder om dit te sien.”

„Die slaaf het die slot oopgesluit toe hy ingaan, en dit weer toege- sluit toe hy uitkom. En net toe ons van tafel af opstaan, het hy vir Oom 'n sleutel gebring—dieselfde sleutel, as jy my vra. Die waatle- moen bewys dat daar 'n mens is; die sleutel bewys hy's 'n gevangene. En ek glo nie juis daar kan twee gevangenes op so 'n klein plantasie- tje wees waar almal so lief en goed is nie. Jim is die gevangene. Gaaf: ek is bly ons het dit deur speurwerk uitgevind; ander maniere is te ordinêr. Nou toe, begin nou jou kop agtermekaar sit en maak 'n plan om Jim daar uit te steel, en ek sal óók dink. Dan kan ons die beste plan gebruik.”

Dis darem nou vir jou 'n *kop* en dit vir 'n blote seun. As ék Tom Sawyer se kop gehad het, sou ek dit sowaar nie verruil het om 'n hertog te word nie, ook nie 'n stuurman op 'n stoomboot of 'n hanswors in 'n sirkus of enigiets anders waaraan ek kan dink nie. Ek het aan 'n plan begin dink—maar eintlik net om my besig te hou, want ek het goed geweet waar die *eintlike* plan vandaan sou kom.

En kort daarna sê Tom dan ook: „Reg?”

„Goed. Laat ons hoor.”

„My plan is dit,” sê ek: „Ons kan maklik seker maak of Jim daar is. Dan bring ons móreaand my kano hiernatoe en ons gaan haal die vlot by die eiland. En die eerste donker nag wat daar weer kom, steel ons die sleutel uit die oubaas se broeksak ná hy bed toe is, en ons gee pad op die vlot, saam met Jim: ons ry snags en kruip bedags weg, nes ek en Jim tevore gemaak het. Dink jy nie dié plan sal werk nie?” „Werk? Natuurlik sal dit werk. Maar dis darem te maklik, man: dis te doodgewoon. En wat beteken 'n plan nou as daar g'n gevaar by kom nie? Dis so flou soos gansmelk. Nee wat, Huck, dan kan jy maar netsowel by 'n seepfabriek gaan inbreek: dis ewe ordinêr.”

Ek het g'n woord gesê nie, want ek het mos verwag dit sou so gaan; en ek het goed geweet dat mens g'neen van dié besware sou kon maak teen die tyd dat hy met sy plan vorendag kom nie.

Hy begin toe ook vertel, en sommer dadelik kon ek sien dié plan is minstens vyftien van myne werd so afgerond is dit; dit sou Jim net so vry maak as myne, en dalk sou dit ons nog almal doodgeskiet kry op die koop toe. Ek was dus doodtevrede en ek het gesê ons kan maar aan die werk spring daaraan. Ek hoef nie nou te vertel wat dit was nie, want ek het tóé al geweet dit sou tog nie lank so bly nie. Algaande sou dit op elke moontlike en onmoontlike manier verander word, en al meer van 'n bielie van 'n plan word as daar maar net kans voor is. En dis dan ook net wat gebeur het.

Een ding was seker: en dit was dat Tom Sawyer dit doodernstig bedoel het en my inderdaad wou help om 'n slaaf vry te maak. Dís wat bokant my vuurmaakplek was. Hier't jy nou 'n seun gehad wat goed grootgemaak was; en hy't 'n reputasie gehad wat geskaad kon word; en sy mense by die huis het reputasies gehad; en hy was glad nie 'n pampoenkop nie, hy was 'n slim ou;

en hy't dinge gewéét; en hy was doodgaaf, glad nie 'n gemene soort mens nie —en tog was hy heeltemal gewillig om sonder enige trots of gevoel of ordentlikheid in dié affêre betrokke te raak en skande oor homself en sy mense te bring, en dit voor die hele wêreld. Nee, ek kon dit doodeenvoudig nie verstaan nie. Dit was ongehoord, en ek het goed geweet ek behoort hom dit te sê ook; want ek behoort 'n ware vriend vir hom te wees en hom die saak net daar te laat los sodat hy homself nog kan red. En ek *het* ook begin om met hom daaroor te praat, maar hy't my net daar stilgemaak en geantwoord:

„Dink jy miskien ek weet nie wat ek doen nie? Dink jy nie ek weet *gewoonlik* wat ek doen nie ?”

„Ja.”

„Het ek nie *gesê* ek sal jou help om die slaaf te steel nie?”

„Ja”

„Nou *toe* dan!”

Dis al wat hy *gesê* het, en dis al wat *ék* *gesê* het. Dit sou tog nie help om méér te sê nie, want as hy eenmaal *gesê* het hy gaan 'n ding doen, dan *doen* hy dit. Maar ek kon nog nie verstaan hóe hy so gewillig kon wees om sy neus in die saak te steek nie; toe't ek dit maar net so uit my kop uit gestel en my nie weer daaroor bekommer nie. As hy dit dan nou eenmaal so wou hê, dan kon *ék* daar niks aan doen nie.

Toe ons weer by die huis aankom, was alles donker en stil; ons kon dus sommer reguit na die hut daar by die asbalie gaan om dit te ondersoek. Ons het oor die werf gestap om te sien wat die honde sou maak. Hulle het ons herken en niks meer geraas as wat plaashonde gewoonlik raas as daar enigiets in die nag verbykom nie. Toe ons by die hut aankom, het ons die voorkant en die twee sykante goed beskou; en in die muur wat ek nog nie tevore gesien het —die een aan die noordekant—het ons 'n vierkantige vensteropening taamlik hoog gewaar, met net een stewige plank daaroor gespyker.

„Mooi skoot,” sê ek. „Daardie gat is groot genoeg vir Jim om deur te klim. Ons hoef net die plank af te ruk.”

„Dis net so eenvoudig soos vroteier en net so maklik soos stokkies-draai,” sê Tom. „Ek hoop darem regtig ons kan iets bedink wat so 'n bietjie meer ingewikkeld is as dít, Huck Finn.”

„Nou goed dan,” antwoord ek. „Kom ons saag vir hom 'n pad oop soos wat ek gemaak het toe ek destyds vermoor is.”

„Dit klink beter,” sê hy. „Dis geheimsinnig en moeilik en goed. Maar ek is seker ons kan iets doen wat twee keer so lank sal neem. Daar's tog g'n haas nie. Ons hou maar intussen ons oë oop.”

Tussen die hut en die heining, aan die agterkant, was daar 'n afdakkie van hout wat aan die hut se hanebalke vas was. Dit was net so lank soos die hut, maar taamlik smal—skaars ses voet. Dit het 'n deur aan die suidekant gehad, en dié was met 'n slot toegesluit. Tom het teruggestap na die seeppot toe en 'n bietjie daar rondgesoek tot- dat hy die ysterding kry waarmee mens die deksel ooplig; die gebruik hy om een van die skakeltjies by die slot oop te buig. Die

ketting val op die grond, ons gaan daar in, en maak die deur weer agter ons toe, en steek 'n vuurhoutjie aan; toe kon ons sien dat daar geen deurloop is tussen die afdakkie en die hut nie; die een was net teen die ander vasgebou. Die kamer het ook g'n vloer gehad nie. Al wat daar was, was 'n paar geroeste, uitgewerkte ou skoffels, en grawe, en pikke, en 'n mank ploeg. Die vuurhoutjie het doodgegaan, en ons het gemaak dat ons uitkom. Ons het weer die skakel toegebuig en toe was die deur net so goed soos altyd gesluit. Tom was in sy skik.

„Mooi skoot!” sê hy. „Ons kan hom uitgrawe. Dit sal omtrent 'n week neem.”

Daarop maak ons aanstalties terug huis toe en ek mik na die agter- deur waar mens 'n grendelriempie van bokvel moes trek—g'neen van die deure was gesluit nie—maar vir Tom Sawyer was dit nie roman- ties genoeg nie. Ons moet doodeenvoudig weer teen daardie weerlig- afleier uitklouter. Maar ná hy omtrent drie keer probeer het en elke keer halfpad bly vassteek en afgeval het, en die laaste slag amper sy harsings uitgeval het, het hy ook begin dink dis beter om maar die saak gewonne te gee. Maar nadat hy 'n bietjie uitgerus het, het hy besluit om net nog één keer te probeer, en dié slag het hy bo uitge- kom.

Teen dagbreek die volgende more was ons al uit die vere en af na die negerhutte om met die honde te speel en maats te maak met die slaaf wat vir Jim sy kos neem—dis te sê *as* dit Jim was wat gevoer is. Die slawe was net omtrent klaar met ontbyt en reg om lande toe te gaan, en Jim se slaaf was besig om 'n blikpan met brood en vleis en goed vol te pak; en terwyl die ander al aan die wegstap was, het die sleutel van die huis af gekom.

Dié neger het 'n vriendelike, laggerige soort gesig gehad en sy peperkorrels was in klein trossies met garing vasgebind. Dit was om die hekse weg te hou. Hy't ons vertel dat die hekse hom die laaste klompie nagte sleg gepla het; hulle't gemaak dat hy allerhande snaakse goed sien en allerhande snaakse woorde en geluide hoor; en nog nooit tevore in sy lewe was hy vir só 'n lang ruk deur die goed gepla nie. Hy't so opgewonde geraak en so oor sy moeilikhede begin uitwei, dat hy skoon vergeet het van wat hy op pad was om te doen.

Dus vra Tom: „Waarvoor is daardie kos? Gaan jy die honde kos gee?”

So stadig, stadig sluip daar 'n glimlag oor die slaaf se gesig, soos wanneer jy 'n stuk baksteen in 'n modderpoel gooi. „Ja, baas Sid,” sê hy. Hond. En 'n snaakse hond daarby. Wil jy hom sien?” „Ja.”

Ek stamp aan Tom en fluister: „Gaan jy hier oop en bloot in die vroemóre ? Dit was mos nie ons plan nie.”

„Nee, dit was nie. Maar dit is nou.”

En daar gaan ons toe, maar die hele affêre het my net niks aange- staan nie. Toe ons daar inkom, was dit so donker dat ons amper niks kon sien nie. Maar Jim was daar. En hy kon *ons* sien. En hy roep: „Maar *Huck!* En my goeiste, assit tog nie baas Tom ok is nie?” Ek het geweet dit gaan gebeur. Ek

het dit verwag. Ek het net nie geweet wat om te doen nie; en al hét ek geweet, sou ek dit nog nie kon doen nie, want die ander slaaf vra toe sommer trompop:

„Maar my jinning, ken jy die base?”

Teen dié tyd kon ons ook taamlik goed sien. Tom kyk die neger vas in die gesig, so half vraend, en hy sê: „Ken *wie* ons?”

„Dié wegloopslaaf.”

„Ek *glo* nie hy ken ons nie. Maar waar't jy daaraan gekom?” „Gekom? Maar hy't dan nou net geskrou hy ken julle!”

Skoon verbaas sê Tom: „Dis darem snaaks. *Wie* het geroep? *Wanneer* het hy geroep? *Wat* het hy geroep?” En hy draai doodkalm na my toe om en vra: „Het jy iemand hoor *roep*?”

„Nee, *ek* het niemand iets hoor sê nie.”

Toe draai hy na Jim toe en beskou hom asof hy hom nooit tevore gesien het nie, en hy vra: „Het jy geroep?”

„Nee, baas,” sê Jim. „Ekket niks gesê nie, baas.”

„Niks?”

„Nee, baas, nie 'n dooi woord nie.”

Toe kyk Tom weer na die slaaf wat nou skoon verbouereerd en verwilderd lyk en hy sê taamlik kwaai: „Wat makeer jou dan, hê? Wat het jou laat dink dat iemand geroep het?”

„Dis die bedingeste hekse, baas. Ek wens ek was liewerster dood, rêrig. Dit gaan allietyd so, baas, hulle wil my nog vrekmaak van bangigheid. Moet tog vir g'n mens daarvan sê nie, baas, want dan kry ek raas by oubaas Silas, want hy sê daar *issie* hekse nie. Ek wens net hy was nou hier gewees, *dan* sou ek hoor wat sê hy. Hy sou nie dié keer daar kon ytgekom het nie. Maar dis mos allietyd so. As 'n man toe is, dan bly hy toe; hy wil niks gaan bekyk en self uitvinne

nie. En as jy iets uitvinne en jy gaan sê vir hom, dan gloof hy jou nie.

Toe gee Tom vir hom 'n paar sent en belowe hom dat hy vir nie- mand sal vertel nie; en hy sê vir hom hy moet nog garing gaan koop om sy peperkorrels mee vas te bind. En toe kyk hy na Jim en sê:

„Ek wonder of oom Silas dié slaaf gaan ophang. As ek 'n neger vang wat so ondankbaar was om weg te loop, dan sou ék hom nooit uitlewer nie—ek sal hom ophang.” En terwyl die slaaf deur se kant toe staan om die geldstuk te beskou en daaraan te byt om seker te maak dat dit eg is, fluister hy saggies vir Jim: „Moenie dat hulle iets agterkom nie. En as jy snags 'n gegrawe hoor, dan's dit óns. Ons gaan jou hier uithaal.”

Jim het net genoeg tyd gehad om ons hande vas te gryp en te druk, want toe kom die ander neger weer terug. Ons het vir hom gesê ons sal weer eendag saamkom as die neger wil hê ons moet; en hy't gesê hy wil baie graag, veral in die donker, want dis dán dat die hekse hom die meeste ry en dan wil hy graag mense by hom hê.

SECTION 35

It would be most an hour, yet, till breakfast, so we left, and struck down into the woods; because Tom said we got to have *some* light to see how to dig by, and a lantern makes too much, and might get us into trouble; what we must have was a lot of them rotten chunks that's called fox-fire^{e1} and just makes a soft kind of a glow when you lay them in a dark place. We fetched an armful and hid it in the weeds, and set down to rest, and Tom says, kind of dissatisfied:

"Blame it, this whole thing is just as easy and awkward as it can be. And so it makes it so rotten difficult to get up a difficult plan. There ain't no watchman to be drugged—now there *ought* to be a watchman. There ain't even a dog to give a sleeping-mixture to. And there's Jim chained by one leg, with a ten-foot chain, to the leg of his bed: why, all you got to do is to lift up the bedstead and slip off the chain. And Uncle Silas he trusts everybody; sends the key to the punkin-headed nigger, and don't send nobody to watch the nigger. Jim could a got out of that window hole before this, only there wouldn't be no use trying to travel with a ten-foot chain on his leg. Why, drat it, Huck, it's the stupidest arrangement I ever see. You got to invent *all* the difficulties. Well, we can't help it, we got to do the best we can with the materials we've got. Anyhow, there's one thing—there's more honor in getting him out through a lot of difficulties and dangers, where there warn't one of them furnished to you by the people who it was their duty to furnish them, and you had to contrive them all out of your own head. Now look at

just that one thing of the lantern. When you come down to the cold facts, we simply got to *let on* that a lantern's resky. Why, we could work with a torchlight procession if we wanted to, / believe. Now, whilst I think of it, we got to hunt up something to make a saw out of, the first chance we get."

"What do we want of a saw?"

"What do we *want* of it? Hain't we got to saw the leg of Jim's bed off, so as to get the chain loose?"

"Why, you just said a body could lift up the bedstead and slip the chain off."

"Well, if that ain't just like you, Huck Finn. You *can* get up the infant-schooliest ways of going at a thing. Why, hain't you ever read any books at all?—Baron Trenck, nor Casanova, nor Benvenuto Chelleeny, nor Henri IV., nor none of them heroes^{e2}? Whoever heard of getting a prisoner loose in such an old-maidy way as that? No; the way all the best authorities does, is to saw the bed-leg in two, and leave it just so, and swallow the sawdust, so it can't be found, and put some dirt and grease around the sawed place so the very keenest seneskal can't see no sign of it's being sawed, and thinks the bed-leg is perfectly sound. Then, the night you're ready, fetch the leg a kick, down she goes; slip off your chain, and there you are. Nothing to do but hitch your rope-ladder to the battlements, shin down it, break your leg in the moat—because a rope-ladder is nineteen foot too short, you know—and there's your horses and your trusty vassles, and they scoop you up and fling you across a saddle and away you go, to your native Langudoce, or

Navarre, or wherever it is. It's gaudy, Huck. I wish there was a moat to this cabin. If we get time, the night of the escape, we'll dig one."

I says:

"What do we want of a moat, when we're going to snake him out from under the cabin?"

But he never heard me. He had forgot me and everything else. He had his chin in his hand, thinking. Pretty soon, he sighs, and shakes his head; then sighs again, and says:

"No, it wouldn't do—there ain't necessity enough for it."

"For what?" I says.

"Why, to saw Jim's leg off," he says.

"Good land!" I says, "why, there ain't *no* necessity for it. And what would you want to saw his leg off for, anyway?"

"Well, some of the best authorities has done it. They couldn't get the chain off, so they just cut their hand off, and shoved. And a leg would be better still. But we got to let that go. There ain't necessity enough in this case; and besides, Jim's a nigger and wouldn't understand the reasons for it, and how it's the custom in Europe; so we'll let it go. But there's one thing—he can have a rope-ladder; we can tear up our sheets and make him a rope-ladder easy enough. And we can send it to him in a pie; it's mostly done that way. And I've et worse pies."

"Why, Tom Sawyer, how you talk," I says; "Jim ain't got

no use for a rope-ladder.”

“He *has* got use for it. How *you* talk, you better say; you don’t know nothing about it. He’s *got* to have a rope ladder; they all do.”

“What in the nation can he *do* with it?”

“*Do* with it? He can hide it in his bed, can’t he? That’s what they all do; and *he’s* got to, too. Huck, you don’t ever seem to want to do anything that’s regular; you want to be starting something fresh all the time. Spose he *don’t* do nothing with it? ain’t it there in his bed, for a clew, after he’s gone? and don’t you reckon they’ll want clews? Of course they will. And you wouldn’t leave them any? That would be a *pretty* howdy-do, *wouldn’t* it! I never heard of such a thing.”

“Well,” I says, “if it’s in the regulations, and he’s got to have it, all right, let him have it; because I don’t wish to go back on no regulations; but there’s one thing, Tom Sawyer—if we go to tearing up our sheets to make Jim a rope-ladder, we’re going to get into trouble with Aunt Sally, just as sure as you’re born. Now, the way I look at it, a hickry-bark ladder don’t cost nothing, and don’t waste nothing, and is just as good to load up a pie with, and hide in a straw tick, as any rag ladder you can start; and as for Jim, he ain’t had no experience, and so *he* don’t care what kind of a——”

“Oh, shucks, Huck Finn, if I was as ignorant as you, I’d keep still—that’s what *I’d* do. Who ever heard of a state prisoner escaping by a hickry-bark ladder? Why, it’s perfectly ridiculous.”

“Well, all right, Tom, fix it your own way; but if you’ll

take my advice, you'll let me borrow a sheet off of the clothesline."

He said that would do. And that give him another idea, and he says:

"Borrow a shirt, too."

"What do we want of a shirt, Tom?"

"Want it for Jim to keep a journal on."

"Journal your granny—*Jim* can't write."

"Spose he *can't* write—he can make marks on the shirt, can't he, if we make him a pen out of an old pewter spoon or a piece of an old iron barrel-hoop?"

"Why, Tom, we can pull a feather out of a goose and make him a better one; and quicker, too."

"*Prisoners* don't have geese running around the donjon-keep to pull pens out of, you muggins. They *always* make their pens out of the hardest, toughest, troublesomest piece of old brass candlestick or something like that they can get their hands on; and it takes them weeks and weeks, and months and months to file it out, too, because they've got to do it by rubbing it on the wall. *They* wouldn't use a goose-quill if they had it. It ain't regular."

"Well, then, what'll we make him the ink out of?"

"Many makes it out of iron-rust and tears; but that's the common sort and women; the best authorities uses their own blood. Jim can do that; and when he wants to send any little common ordinary mysterious

message to let the world know where he's captivated, he can write it on the bottom of a tin plate with a fork and throw it out of the window. The Iron Mask²⁹ always done that, and it's a blame' good way, too."

"Jim ain't got no tin plates. They feed him in a pan."

"That ain't anything; we can get him some."

"Can't nobody *read* his plates."

"That ain't got nothing to *do* with it, Huck Finn. All *he's* got to do is to write on the plate and throw it out. You don't *have* to be able to read it. Why, half the time you can't read anything a prisoner writes on a tin plate, or anywhere else."

"Well, then, what's the sense in wasting the plates?"

"Why, blame it all, it ain't the *prisoner's* plates."

"But it's *somebody's* plates, ain't it?"

"Well, spos'n it is? What does the *prisoner* care whose _____"

He broke off there, because we heard the breakfast-horn blowing. So we cleared out for the house.

Along during that morning I borrowed a sheet and a white shirt off of the clothes-line; and I found an old sack and put them in it, and we went down and got the fox-fire, and put that in too. I called it borrowing, because that was what pap always called it, but Tom said it warn't borrowing, it was stealing. He said we was representing prisoners; and prisoners don't care how they get a thing so they get it, and nobody don't

blame them for it, either. It ain't no crime in a prisoner to steal the thing he needs to get away with, Tom said; it's his right; and so, as long as we was representing a prisoner, we had a perfect right to steal anything on this place we had the least use for, to get ourselves out of prison with. He said if we warn't prisoners it would be a very different thing, and nobody but a mean ornery person would steal when he warn't a prisoner. So we allowed we would steal everything there was that come handy. And yet he made a mighty fuss, one day, after that, when I stole a watermelon out of the nigger patch and eat it; and he made me go and give the niggers a dime, without telling them what it was for. Tom said that what he meant was, we could steal anything we *needed*. Well, I says, I needed the watermelon. But he said I didn't need it to get out of prison with, there's where the difference was. He said if I'd a wanted it to hide a knife in, and smuggle it to Jim to kill the seneskal with, it would a been all right. So I let it go at that, though I couldn't see no advantage in my representing a prisoner, if I got to set down and chaw over a lot of gold-leaf distinctions like that, every time I see a chance to hog a watermelon.

Well, as I was saying, we waited that morning till everybody was settled down to business, and nobody in sight around the yard; then Tom he carried the sack into the lean-to whilst I stood off a piece to keep watch. By-and-by he come out, and we went and set down on the wood-pile, to talk. He says:

"Everything's all right, now, except tools: and that's easy fixed."

"Tools?" I says.

“Yes.”

“Tools for what?”

“Why, to dig with. We ain’t agoing to *gnaw* him out, are we?”

“Ain’t them old crippled picks and things in there good enough to dig a nigger out with?” I says.

He turns on me looking pitying enough to make a body cry, and says:

“Huck Finn, did you *ever* hear of a prisoner having picks and shovels, and all the modern conveniences in his wardrobe to dig himself out with? Now I want to ask you—if you got any reasonableness in you at all—what kind of a show would *that* give him to be a hero? Why, they might as well lend him the key, and done with it. Picks and shovels—why they wouldn’t furnish ’em to a king.”

“Well, then,” I says, “if we don’t want the picks and shovels, what do we want?”

“A couple of case-knives.”

“To dig the foundations out from under that cabin with?”

“Yes.”

“Confound it, it’s foolish, Tom.”

“It don’t make no difference how foolish it is, it’s the *right* way—and it’s the regular way. And there ain’t no *other* way, that ever I heard of, and I’ve read all the

books that gives any information about these things. They always dig out with a case-knife—and not through dirt, mind you; generly it's through solid rock. And it takes them weeks and weeks and weeks, and for ever and ever. Why, look at one of them prisoners in the bottom dungeon of the Castle Deef,³⁰ in the harbor of Marseilles, that dug himself out that way; how long was *he* at it, you reckon?"

"I don't know."

"Well, guess."

"I don't know. A month and a half?"

"*Thirty-seven year*—and he come out in China. *That's* the kind. I wish the bottom of *this* fortress was solid rock."

"*Jim* don't know nobody in China."

"What's *that* got to do with it? Neither did that other fellow. But you're always a-wandering off on a side issue. Why can't you stick to the main point?"

"All right—I don't care where he comes out, so he *comes* out; and Jim don't, either, I reckon. But there's one thing, anyway—Jim's too old to be dug out with a case-knife. He won't last."

"Yes he will *last*, too. You don't reckon it's going to take thirty-seven years to dig out through a *dirt* foundation, do you?"

"How long will it take, Tom?"

"Well, we can't resk being as long as we ought to,

because it mayn't take very long for Uncle Silas to hear from down there by New Orleans. He'll hear Jim ain't from there. Then his next move will be to advertise Jim, or something like that. So we can't resk being as long digging him out as we ought to. By rights I reckon we ought to be a couple of years; but we can't. Things being so uncertain, what I recommend is this: that we really dig right in, as quick as we can; and after that, we can *let on*, to ourselves, that we was at it thirty-seven years. Then we can snatch him out and rush him away the first time there's an alarm. Yes, I reckon that'll be the best way."

"Now, there's *sense* in that," I says. "Letting on don't cost nothing; letting on ain't no trouble; and if it's any object, I don't mind letting on we was at it a hundred and fifty year. It wouldn't strain me none, after I got my hand in. So I'll mosey along now, and smouch a couple of case-knives."

"Smouch three," he says; "we want one to make a saw out of."

"Tom, if it ain't unregular and irreligious to sejest it," I says, "there's an old rusty saw-blade around yonder sticking under the weatherboarding behind the smoke-house."

He looked kind of weary and discouraged-like, and says:

"It ain't no use to try to learn you nothing, Huck. Run along and smouch the knives—three of them." So I done it.

Chapter 35

Daar was nog 'n goeie uur voor oggendete, dus is ons eers vort die bosse in, want Tom het gesê mens moet darem 'n *bietjie* lig hê om by te grawe en 'n lantern is te helder—dit kon ons in die sop laat beland; ons moes dus 'n klomp van daardie soort verrotte takke gaan soek wat die mense „jakkalsvuur” noem en wat so 'n effense skynsel afgee as mens dit in 'n donker plek neersit. Ons het 'n vraggie daarvan bymekaargemaak en dit tussen die onkruid gaan wegsteek, en toe gaan sit en rus.

„Nee magtie,” sê Tom ontevrederig. „Dié affêre is darem glad te maklik en te lomp. En dit maak dit so vervlaks moeilik om 'n moei- like plan te bedink. Daar's nie eers 'n nagwag wat ons met ver- dowingsmiddels kan bydam nie—en daar behoort 'n nagwag te wees. Hemel, daar's nie eers 'n hond wat mens 'n slaapdrank kan ingee nie. En daar sit Jim met sy een been vasgemaak aan 'n tien- voetketting wat aan sy bed se poot vas is; al wat mens hoef te doen, is om die bed op te lig en die ketting af te haal. En oom Silas vertrou enigiemand; hy stuur sommer die sleutel vir daardie pampoen van 'n slaaf en laat nie eers iemand saamkom om hóm dop te hou nie. Jim kon al lankal self by daardie venstergat uitgeklim het as hy met 'n tienvoetketting oor die weg kon kom. Nee Huck, jong, dis wragtie die onnoselste affêre wat ek nog gesien het. Ons sal al die moeilikhede self moet *uitdink*. Maar nou ja, dis nie óns skuld nie en ons sal maar ons bes moet doen met die materiaal wat ons kan gebruik. Een ding is darem seker: dit vra baie meer van 'n man om hom deur 'n klomp moeilikhede en gevare uit te help as nie een van dié goed voorsien is deur die mense wie se plig dit is om te sorg dat daar sulke moeilikhede en gevare is nie, sodat jy alles self moet *uitdink*. Kyk nou maar na die ding met die lantern. As mens na die harde feite kyk, dan moet jy erken dis gevaarlik om met 'n lantern te werk. Ek skat ons kan net- sowel met 'n fakkeloptog aan die werk spring. Terloops, nou dat ek daaraan dink, ons sal iets moet kry waarvan ons 'n saag kan maak— en dit moet sommer góú gebeur.”

„Waarvoor het ons 'n saag nodig?”

„Waarvoor? Vergeet jy dan dat ons Jim se katelpoot moet afsaag om die ketting los te kry?”

„Maar jy't dan nou net gesê mens kan sommer die bed oplig en die ketting afhaal.”

„Dis ook nes jy is, Huck Finn. Natuurlik kan jy soos 'n Sub A- kind te werk gaan as jy wil. Hene man, het jy nog nooit 'n boek gelees nie? Van baron Trenck, of Casanova, of Benvenuto Cellini, of Hendrik die Vierde of so 'n held nie? Waar't jy nou al ooit gehoor dat mens 'n gevangene op so 'n ouvroumanier gaan red ? Nooit. Wat al die grootste gesaghebbendes doen, is om die katelpoot middeldeer te saag en dit net so te laat bly en dan die

saagsels in te sluk sodat niemand dit kan kry nie, en om daarna sand en vuilgoed rondom die saagplek te strooi sodat seifs 'n ou met valkoë nie kan sien dat dit deurgesaag is nie en dink die katelpoot is nog net so reg soos altyd. En as alles eindelik reg is, dan gee jy een nag die katel 'n skop, en die poot val af; jy maak jou ketting los en daar gaat jy. Al wat jy daarna hoef te doen, is om jou touleer oor die vestingmuur te gooi, daarteen af te klouter, jou been in die grag te breek—want 'n touleer is mos altyd negentien voet te kort—en dan staan jou perde en jou betrou- bare bediendes gereed, en hulle lig jou in die saal en daar trek julle, terug na jou geboorteland in Languedoc of Navarre of waar ookal. Dis vir jou opwindend, Huck. Afgryslik. Ek wens daar was 'n grag rondom die hut. As ons 'n kans kry, die nag wanneer ons hom daar uithaal, kan ons nog gou een grawe.”

„Wat wil ons met 'n grag maak as ons hom ónder die hut gaan uithaal?” vra ek.

Maar hy hoor nie eers wat ek sê nie. Hy't skoon van my vergeet, en van alles om hom. Hy sit net daar met sy ken op sy hand gestut, en hy *dink*. Eindelik sug hy, en skud sy kop; dan sug hy weer 'n slag en sê:

„Nee, dit sal nie deug nie—só noodsaaklik is dit nie.”

„Wat?” vra ek.

„Om Jim se been af te saag, natuurlik.”

„Hemel!” sê ek. „Daar's mos g'n nodigheid vir so iets nie! Hoe- kom sou mens so iets wou doen?”

„Dis wat party van die grootste gesaghebbendes gedoen het. Hulle kon nie die ketting afkry nie, dus het hulle sommer hulle een hand af- gekap en padgegee. 'n Been behoort nog beter te wees. Maar ons sal maar daarvan vergeet. Daar's nie genoeg nodigheid voor nie; en buitendien, Jim is 'n neger—hy sal dalk nie verstaan hoekom ons dit doen nie, want hy weet nie dis hoe die mense in Europa maak nie. So ons vergeet maar daarvan. Maar hy kan darem 'n touleer kry. Ons kan ons lakens stukkend skeur en maklik vir hom een maak. Dan kan ons dit in 'n pastei na hom toe stuur—dis soos hulle gewoonlik maak. En ek het al slegter pasteie geëet as dit.”

„Jy kan darem twak praat, Tom Sawyer,” antwoord ek. „Jim het mos g'n 'n touleer nodig nie.”

„Natuurlik het hy. Jy kan darem twak praat: hoekom sê jy nie liewers reguit jy weet niks van sulke goed nie? Hy *moet* 'n touleer hê: hulle't dit almal.”

„Maar wat op aarde kan hy met die ding *doen*?”

„*Doen*? Hy kan dit in sy bed wegsteek, natuurlik. Dis wat hulle almal maak. En hy moet dit eenvoudig ook doen. Huck, dit lyk my rêrig jy wil nooit iets doen soos dit hoort nie; jy wil heeltyd met nuwe dinge kom. Wat maak dit saak as hy die ding nie gebruik nie? Dan's dit mos daar in sy bed as 'n leidraad ná hy vort is—of dink jy miskien hulle wil nie leirade hê nie? Natuurlik wil hulle. En jy wil vir hulle niks laat staan nie? *Dit* sal vir jou 'n mooi gemors wees. Ek het nog nooit in my lewe van so iets gehoor nie.”

„Nou goed,” sê ek. „As dit dan in die reëls staan en as hy een móét hê, goed, gee dit vir hom; want ek wil g'n reëls oortree nie. Maar laat ek jou darem dit sê, Tom Sawyer: as ons ons lakens gaan stukkend skeur om vir Jim 'n touleer te maak, dan gaan ons in die sop beland by tant Sally, dit belowe ek jou. Soos ék die ding beskou, is 'n leer van boombas net so goed: dit kos niks, en jy verniel niks, en dis net so maklik om in 'n pastei te bêre en in 'n strooimatrass weg te steek as enige lapleer wat jy op aarde kan maak; en Jim weet tog niks van sulke dinge nie—hý sal nie omgee watse soort. .

„Hemel, Huck Finn, as ek so onnosel was soos jy, sou ek liewers stilgebly het—dis wat ék sou gedoen het. Waar't jy nou al ooit gehoor van 'n bandiet wat met 'n boombasleer ontsnap het? Dis skoon be- laglik, man.”

„Nou goed, Tom, maak dan maar soos jy lus kry. Maar laat ek jou darem één stukkie raad gee: laat ek liewerster 'n laken van die was- goedlyn af steel.”

Hy neem dié voorstel aan. Dit gee hom ook sommer 'n ander plan, en hy sê: „Lê vir ons 'n hemp ook vas.”

„Wat gaan ons met 'n hemp maak, Tom?”

„Ons het dit nodig sodat Jim sy dagboek daarop kan hou.” „Dagboek se voet—*Jim* kan mos nie skryf nie.”

„En wat daarvan ? Hy kan mos merke op die hemp maak, of hoe? Ons kan vir hom 'n pen van 'n ou lepel maak, of van 'n stuk ou hoepel.”

„Maar Tom, ons kan liewers vir hom 'n veer uit 'n gans se vlerk uittrek en 'n behoorlike pen maak. Dit sal gouer wees ook.” „Pampoen! Dink jy daar hoi ganse in 'n gevangene se kerker rond sodat hy sommer een kan bydam en begin vere uittrek? Hulle maak *altyd* hulle penne uit die hardste, taaiste, moeilikste ou stuk koper- kandelaar of so iets wat hulle in die hande kry; en dit duur weke en weke, en dan nog maande en maande om dit reg te vyl, want hulle moet dit teen die muur regskeer. Hulle sal nie 'n gansveer gebruik nie seifs al hét hulle een. Dit word net nie gedoen nie.”

„Nou goed. Maar waarvan gaan ons vir hom ink maak?”

„Baie gebruik ysterroes en trane—maar dis sommer vroumense. Die grootste gesaghebbendes gebruik hulle eie bloed. Jim kan dit ook doen. En as hy sommer 'n gewone ordinêre geheime boodskap wil stuur sodat die wêreld kan weet waar hy gevange gehou word, kan hy dit met 'n vurk onderaan 'n blikbord uitkrap en dit deur die venster gooi. Dis wat die Man in die Ystermasker altyd gedoen het, en dis sommer 'n bak manier, sê ek vir jou.”

„Jim het g'n blikborde nie. Hy kry sy kos in 'n pan.”

„Dit maak nie saak nie. Ons kan vir hom borde in die hande kry.”

„En as niemand sy borde kan *lees* nie?”

„Dit het niks met die saak uit te waai nie, Huck Finn. Al wat hý hoef te doen, is om op die bord te skryf en dit deur die venster te gooi. Mens *hoef* dit mos nie te lees nie. Gits, die meeste van die tyd kan mens niks lees van wat 'n gevangene op 'n blikbord of waar ookal geskryf het nie.”

„Dan's dit mos verspot om borde so te mors.”

„Maar my magtie, dis mos nie die *gevangene* se borde nie.”

„Maar dis tog *iemand* s’n, of hoe?”

„En wat daarvan ? Dink jy ’n *gevangene* gee om wie se . . .” Daar breek hy sy sin kortaf, want ons kan die klok vir oggendete hoor lui. Ons laat spaander huis toe.

In die loop van die oggend het ek ’n taken en ’n wit hemp van die wasgoeddraad af geleen en dit in ’n ou goingsak geprop, en daarna die jakkalsvuur gaan haal en dit ook in die sak gestee. Ek sê „leen”, want dis wat Pa ook altyd gesê het; maar Tom het reguit gesê dis g’n lenery nie, dis steel. Hy’t gesê ons is besig om ’n *gevangene* te ver-teenwoordig, en *gevangenes* gee nie om hoe hulle iets in die hande kry nie, so lank hulle dit net *kry*, en niemand kan hulle ook daarvoor blameer nie. Dis tog g’n misdad as ’n *gevangene* iets steel wat hy wil gebruik om te ontsnap nie, het Tom gesê: dis sy *reg*; en as ons ’n *gevangene* verteenwoordig, dan’t ons ook die volste reg om enigiets te steel wat ons kan gebruik om uit die tronk uit te kom. As ons nié *gevangenes* was nie, het hy gesê, dan sou dit heeltemal ’n ander storie wees; want net ’n baie lae gemene soort mens sal iets steel as hy nie ’n *gevangene* is nie. Ons het dus die reg gehad om te steel wat ons wil. En tog het einste hy net die volgende dag ’n groot kabaal opgeskop toe ek ’n waatlemoen uit die negers se tuin vasgelê en opgeëet het; en hy’t my gedwing om die negers daarvoor te gaan betaal en vir hulle te sê waarvoor die geld was. Want wat hy glo eintlik bedoel het, was dat ons enigiets mag steel wat ons *nodig* het. Maar, sê ek, ek het die waatlemoen nodig gehad. Maar ek het dit nie nodig gehad om uit die tronk uit te ontsnap nie, antwoord hy, en dis glo wat die verskil maak. As ek dit wou gebruik om ’n mes in weg te steek om dit vir Jim in te smokkel sodat hy sy sipier kon vermoor, dan sou dit glo heeltemal toelaatbaar gewees het. Daarby het ek die saak maar gelos, al kon ek nou rêrig g’n nut daarin sien om ’n bandiet te verteenwoordig en dan so te bly foeter met ’n haarklowery elke liewe slag as ek lus voel om ’n waatlemoen vas te lê nie.

Nou ja, soos ek nog laas besig was om te sê, ons het toe dié more gewag tot almal mooi aan die werk was en daar niemand op die werf te siene was nie; toe’t Tom die sak na die buitekamertjie toe gedra en ek het ’n entjie daarvandaan gestaan en kywie hou. Na ’n rukkie kom hy weer uit en ons loop sit eers op die houthoop en praat.

„Goed,” sê hy. „Alles is nou agtermekaar behalwe die gereedskap, en dís maklik.”

„Gereedskap?” vra ek.

„Ja.”

„Gereedskap waarvoor?”

„Om mee te grawe, natuurlik. Of het jy gedink ons gaan hom daar uit *kou*?”

„Is daardie spul ou pikke en goed dan nie goed genoeg om ’n slaaf mee uit te grawe nie?”

Hy kyk my so meewarig aan dat dit genoeg is om mens te laat grens, en hy sê: „Huck Finn, het jy al ooit van ’n bandiet gehoor wat grawe en pikke en allerhande moderne geriewe in sy klerekas het om vir hom ’n pad mee uit te grawe? Sê jy nou vir my—as jy nog ’n paar pitte in jou kop oorhet—hoe sou dit hom ’n held maak? Dan kan hulle hom mos maar netsowel die sleutel leen en klaar kry. Grawe en pikke—hemel, hulle sal nie eers vir ’n koning sulke goed gee nie.” „Nou goed dan,” sê ek. „As ons dan nie pikke en grawe wil hê nie: wat *wil* ons hê?”

„’n Paar knipmesse.”

„Om die hut se fondamente uit te grawe?”

„Ja.”

„Maar dis mos malligheid, Tom.”

„Dit maak nie saak of dit malligheid is nie—dis die *regie* manier, en dis die *gewone* manier. En daar’s g’n ander manier waarvan ék al ooit gehoor het nie, en ek het al die boeke gelees waar mens inligting oor dié klas ding kry. Hulle grawe altyd ’n tunnel met knipmesse. En ook nie sommer deur sagte grond nie, gehoor, maar gewoonlik deur soliede rots. En dit kos weke en weke en weke, en dit hou vir ewig en altyd aan. Wat van daardie een bandiet in die heel onderste kerker van die kasteel in Marseilles se hawe, wat vir hom op dié manier ’n pad uitgegrawe het: hoe lank dink jy was hy daarmee besig?”

„Weet nie.”

„Nou, raai dan.”

„Weet nie. Een en ’n halwe maand?”

„*Sewe-en-dertig jaar*—en hy’t in China uitgekom. *Dis* hoe mens maak. Ek wens dié kasteel het op soliede rots gestaan.”

„Maar *Jim* ken niemand in China nie.”

„Wat maak dít miskien saak ? Daardie ander ou het ook nie. Maar jy dwaal alewig af. Hoekom kan jy nie by die hoofsaak bly nie ?” „Nou goed, *ek* gee tog nie om waar hy uitkom nie, solank as wat hy net *uikom*. Ek glo ook nie *Jim* gee om nie. Maar jy moet darem één ding onthou: *Jim* is te oud om met ’n knipmes uitgegrawe te word: hy sal nooit so lank hou nie.”

„Natuurlik sal hy hou. Of dink jy miskien dít gaan *sewe-en-dertig jaar* lank neem om deur ’n grondfondament te grou?”

„Hoe lank sal dit vat, Tom?”

„Ons kan dit nie waag om so lank te vat as wat dit hóórt nie, want dalk hoor oom Silas sommer een van die dae van New Orleans. Hy sal hoor *Jim* kom nie daarvandaan nie en dan sal hy moet begin adverteer of so iets. Dis dié dat ons dit nie kan waag om so lank te grawe as wat ons behoort nie. Ek skat ons behoort eintlik ’n paar jaar lank besig te wees, maar nou kan ons nie. Terwyl die saak dan nou so onseker is, wil ek voorstel dat ons maar so gou as wat ons kan daardie gat grawe; daarna kan ons mos maar *maak* asof dít *sewe-en-dertig jaar* lank geduur het. En nes die wêreld dan begin gevaarlik word, loop haal ons hom daar uit en maak dat hy wegkom. Ja. Ek skat dis die beste plan.”

„Dis nou slim,” sê ek. „So ’n kammaspelery kos niks, en dis g’n moeite nie; en as dit sou help, gee ek nie om om te maak of dit ’n honderd-en-vyftig jaar geduur het nie. Dit sou my nie pla nie, nie as ek eers konfyt is in die saak nie. Ek gaan sommer nou kyk of ek ’n paar knipmesse kan vaslê.”

„Gaps drie,” sê hy. „Ons het een nodig om ’n saag te maak.” „Tom,” sê ek. „As dit nie teen die reels is nie, en dis nie heiligs- kennis nie, dan wil ek jou graag sê daar’s ’n ou geroeste saag onder die planke en goed daar agter die rookhok.”

Hy lyk skielik half moeg en moedeloos, en hy sê: „Dit help ook nie om jónu iets te probeer leer nie, Huck. Toe nou, weg is jy, en loop gaps vir ons die messe—*drie* van hulle.”

En toe maak ek maar so.

SECTION 36

As soon as we reckoned everybody was asleep, that night, we went down the lightning-rod³⁰, and shut ourselves up in the lean-to, and got out our pile of fox-fire, and went to work. We cleared everything out of the way, about four or five foot along the middle of the bottom log. Tom said he was right behind Jim's bed now, and we'd dig in under it, and when we got through there couldn't nobody in the cabin ever know there was any hole there, because Jim's counterpin hung down most to the ground, and you'd have to raise it up and look under to see the hole. So we dug and dug, with the case-knives, till most midnight; and then we was dog-tired, and our hands was blistered, and yet you couldn't see we'd done anything, hardly. At last I says:

"This ain't no thirty-seven year job, this is a thirty-eight year job, Tom Sawyer."

He never said nothing. But he sighed, and pretty soon he stopped digging, and then for a good little while I knowed he was thinking. Then he says:

"It ain't no use, Huck, it ain't agoing to work. If we was prisoners it would, because then we'd have as many years as we wanted, and no hurry; and we wouldn't get but a few minutes to dig, every day, while they was changing watches, and so our hands wouldn't get blistered, and we could keep it up right along, year in and year out, and do it right, and the way it ought to be done. But we can't fool along, we got to rush; we ain't

got no time to spare. If we was to put in another night this way, we'd have to knock off for a week to let our hands get well—couldn't touch a case-knife with them sooner."

"Well, then, what we going to do, Tom?"

"I'll tell you. It ain't right, and it ain't moral, and I wouldn't like it to get out—but there ain't only just the one way; we got to dig him out with the picks, and *let on* it's case-knives."

"*Now you're talking!*" I says; "your head gets leveler and leveler all the time, Tom Sawyer," I says. "Picks is the thing, moral or no moral; and as for me, I don't care shucks for the morality of it, nohow. When I start in to steal a nigger, or a watermelon, or a Sunday-school book, I ain't no ways particular how it's done so it's done. What I want is my nigger; or what I want is my watermelon; or what I want is my Sunday-school book; and if a pick's the handiest thing, that's the thing I'm agoing to dig that nigger or that watermelon or that Sunday-school book out with; and I don't give a dead rat what the authorities thinks about it nuther."

"Well," he says, "there's excuse for picks and letting-on in a case like this; if it warn't so, I wouldn't approve of it, nor I wouldn't stand by and see the rules broke—because right is right, and wrong is wrong, and a body ain't got no business doing wrong when he ain't ignorant and knows better. It might answer for *you* to dig Jim out with a pick, *without* any letting-on, because you don't know no better; but it wouldn't for me, because I do know better. Gimme a case-knife."

He had his own by him, but I handed him mine. He

flung it down, and says:

“Gimme a *case-knife*.”

I didn’t know just what to do—but then I thought. I scratched around amongst the old tools, and got a pick-ax and give it to him, and he took it and went to work, and never said a word.

He was always just that particular. Full of principle.

So then I got a shovel, and then we picked and shoveled, turn about, and made the fur fly. We stuck to it about a half an hour, which was as long as we could stand up; but we had a good deal of a hole to show for it. When I got up stairs, I looked out at the window and see Tom doing his level best with the lightning-rod, but he couldn’t come it, his hands was so sore. At last he says:

“It ain’t no use, it can’t be done. What you reckon I better do? Can’t you think up no way?”

“Yes,” I says, “but I reckon it ain’t regular. Come up the stairs, and let on it’s a lightning-rod.”

So he done it.

Next day Tom stole a pewter spoon and a brass candlestick in the house, for to make some pens for Jim out of, and six tallow candles; and I hung around the nigger cabins, and laid for a chance, and stole three tin plates. Tom said it wasn’t enough; but I said nobody wouldn’t ever see the plates that Jim throwed out, because they’d fall in the dog-fennel and jimpson weeds under the window-hole—then we could tote

them back and he could use them over again. So Tom was satisfied. Then he says:

“Now, the thing to study out is, how to get the things to Jim.”

“Take them in through the hole,” I says, “when we get it done.”

He only just looked scornful, and said something about nobody ever heard of such an idiotic idea, and then he went to studying. By-and-by he said he had ciphered out two or three ways, but there warn’t no need to decide on any of them yet. Said we’d got to post Jim first.

That night we went down the lightning-rod a little after ten, and took one of the candles along, and listened under the window-hole, and heard Jim snoring; so we pitched it in, and it didn’t wake him. Then we whirled in with the pick and shovel, and in about two hours and a half the job was done. We crept in under Jim’s bed and into the cabin, and pawed around and found the candle and lit it, and stood over Jim a while, and found him looking hearty and healthy, and then we woke him up gentle and gradual. He was so glad to see us he most cried; and called us honey, and all the pet names he could think of; and was for having us hunt up a cold chisel to cut the chain off of his leg with, right away, and clearing out without losing any time. But Tom he showed him how unregular it would be, and set down and told him all about our plans, and how we could alter them in a minute any time there was an alarm; and not to be the least afraid, because we would see he got away, *sure*. So Jim he said it was all right, and

we set there and talked over old times a while, and then Tom asked a lot of questions, and when Jim told him Uncle Silas come in every day or two to pray with him, and Aunt Sally come in to see if he was comfortable and had plenty to eat, and both of them was kind as they could be, Tom says:

“Now I know how to fix it. We’ll send you some things by them.”

I said, “Don’t do nothing of the kind; it’s one of the most jackass ideas I ever struck;” but he never paid no attention to me; went right on. It was his way when he’d got his plans set.

So he told Jim how we’d have to smuggle in the rope-ladder pie, and other large things, by Nat, the nigger that fed him, and he must be on the lookout, and not be surprised, and not let Nat see him open them; and we would put small things in uncle’s coat pockets and he must steal them out; and we would tie things to aunt’s apron strings or put them in her apron pocket, if we got a chance; and told him what they would be and what they was for. And told him how to keep a journal on the shirt with his blood, and all that. He told him everything. Jim he couldn’t see no sense in the most of it, but he allowed we was white folks and knowed better than him; so he was satisfied, and said he would do it all just as Tom said.

Jim had plenty corn-cob pipes and tobacco; so we had a right down good sociable time; then we crawled out through the hole, and so home to bed, with hands that looked like they’d been chewed. Tom was in high spirits. He said it was the best fun he ever had in his

life, and the most intellectual; and said if he only could see his way to it we would keep it up all the rest of our lives and leave Jim to our children to get out; for he believed Jim would come to like it better and better the more he got used to it. He said that in that way it could be strung out to as much as eighty year, and would be the best time on record. And he said it would make us all celebrated that had a hand in it.

In the morning we went out to the wood-pile and chopped up the brass candlestick into handy sizes, and Tom put them and the pewter spoon in his pocket. Then we went to the nigger cabins, and while I got Nat's notice off, Tom shoved a piece of candlestick into the middle of a corn-pone that was in Jim's pan, and we went along with Nat to see how it would work, and it just worked noble; when Jim bit into it it most mashed all his teeth out; and there warn't ever anything could a worked better. Tom said so himself. Jim he never let on but what it was only just a piece of rock or something like that that's always getting into bread, you know; but after that he never bit into nothing but what he jabbed his fork into it in three or four places, first.

And whilst we was a standing there in the dimmish light, here comes a couple of the hounds bulging in, from under Jim's bed; and they kept on piling in till there was eleven of them, and there warn't hardly room in there to get your breath. By jings, we forgot to fasten that lean-to door. The nigger Nat he only just hollered "witches!" once, and keeled over onto the floor amongst the dogs, and begun to groan like he was dying. Tom jerked the door open and flung out a slab of Jim's meat, and the dogs went for it, and in two

seconds he was out himself and back again and shut the door, and I knowed he'd fixed the other door too. Then he went to work on the nigger, coaxing him and petting him, and asking him if he'd been imagining he saw something again. He raised up, and blinked his eyes around, and says:

"Mars Sid, you'll say I's a fool, but if I didn't b'lieve I see most a million dogs, er devils, er some'n, I wisht I may die right heah in dese tracks. I did, mos' sholy. Mars Sid, I *felt* um—I *felt* um, sah; dey was all over me. Dad fetch it, I jis' wisht I could git my han's on one er dem witches jis' wunst—on'y jis' wunst—it's all I'd ast. But mos'ly I wisht dey'd lemme 'lone, I does."

Tom says:

"Well, I tell you what I think. What makes them come here just at this runaway nigger's breakfast-time? It's because they're hungry; that's the reason. You make them a witch pie; that's the thing for *you* to do."

"But my lan', Mars Sid, how's I gwyne to make 'm a witch pie? I doan' know how to make it. I hain't ever hearn er sich a thing b'fo.'"

"Well, then, I'll have to make it myself."

"Will you do it, honey?—will you? I'll wusshup de groun' und' yo' foot, I will!"

"All right, I'll do it, seeing it's you, and you've been good to us and showed us the runaway nigger. But you got to be mighty careful. When we come around, you turn your back; and then whatever we've put in the pan, don't you let on you see it at all. And don't you

look, when Jim unloads the pan—something might happen, I don't know what. And above all, don't you *handle* the witch-things."

"*Hannel* 'm Mars Sid? What *is* you a talkin' 'bout? I wouldn' lay de weight er my finger on um, not f'r ten hund'd thous'n' billion dollars, I wouldn't."

Chapter 36

Net toe almal dié nag mooi aan die slaap was, het ons teen die weerligaffeier afgeseil, ons daar in die buitekamertjie gaan toemaak, die hoop jakkalsvuur uitgehaal en aan die werk ge- spring. Vir so 'n vier, vyf voet al langs die middel van die onderste stomp het ons alles uit die pad uit geneem. Nou was ons reg agter Jim se bed, het Tom gesê, en ons kon sorg dat ons ónder die katel uitkom, dan sou niemand ooit die gat sien nie, want Jim se kombers het tot byna op die grond afgehang en jy sou dit eers moes oplig as jy daarónder wou sien. Toe't ons met die messe aan die grawe geraak en tot ampertjies middernag geswoeg. Toe was ons kapot en ons hande die ene blare, en tog kon mens nog skaars sien dat ons iets uitgerig het.

Eindelik sê ek: „Tom Sawyer, dis g'n sewe-en-dertig-jaar se werk die nie: dis agt-en-dertig jaar s'n."

Hy antwoord nie. Maar hy sug, en kort daarna hou hy op met grawe, en 'n hele rukkie bly hy doodstil sit en dink. Eindelik sê hy:

„Nee, Huck-jong, dit gaan nooit werk nie. As ons bandiete was, goed, dán sou dit gewerk het, want dan kon ons net soveel jare ge- neem het as wat ons wou; dan kon ons net 'n paar minute elke dag gegrawe het, en beurte geneem het sodat ons hande nie vol blare raak nie; en só sou ons jaar in en jaar uit kon aanhou en die werk doen soos dit gedoen behóórt te word. Maar *ons* kan nie so aankar- ring nie, ons moet gouspeel, ons kan nie tyd verspil nie. As ons nóg 'n nag so te kere gaan, sal ons eers 'n week lank moet rus om ons hande te laat gesond word—ons sal net nie aan 'n knipmes kan vát nie."

„Wat moet ons dan maak, Tom?"

„Ek sal jou sê. Ek weet dis nie reg nie, en dis nie moreel nie, en ek sou nie graag sien dat dit uitlek nie—maar daar's vir ons net een uitweg: ons moet hom met pikke hier uitgrawe en dan maar *maak* asof dit met knipmesse was."

„Mooi skoot!" roep ek uit. „Jy begin nou al meer pitte in jou kop kry, Tom Sawyer. Pikke is net wat ons nodig het, reg of nie reg nie; om die waarheid te sê, dit traak my niks of dit reg of verkeerd is nie. As ek eenmaal besluit het om 'n slaaf of'n waatlemoen of'n Sondag- skoolboekie te steel, dan gee ek nie meer om hóé dit gedoen word nie. Al wat ek wil hê is my slaaf,

of my waatlemoen, of my Sondagskool- boekie. En as 'n pik die maklikste werk, nou ja, dan *gebruik* ek 'n pik om daardie neger of daardie waatlemoen of daardie Sondagskool- boekie mee uit te grawe; en dit traak my net niks wat die gesagheb- bendes daarvan dink nie."

„Wel,” sê hy, „in 'n saak soos dié het mens 'n verskoning as jy 'n pik gebruik en kamma-speel. Anders sou ek dit nooit goedgekeur het of toegelaat het dat die reels oortree word nie—want wat reg is, is reg, en wat verkeerd is, is verkeerd, en mens kannie gaan staan en verkeerd doen as jy voor jou siel van beter weet nie. Jý kan miskien nog vir Jim met 'n pik loop uitgrawe sónder om kamma te speel, want jy weet nie van beter nie. Maar nie ek nie, want ek wéét van beter. Gee my 'n knipmes."

Hy't sy eie by hom gehad, maar ek gee hom myne aan. Hy smyt dit neer, en sê: „Gee my 'n *knipmes*."

Vir 'n oomblik het ek glad nie geweet wat om te maak nie—maar toe snap ek dit. Ek begin daar tussen die ou gereedskap rondvrotel en haal 'n pik uit en gee dit vir hom, en hy neem dit en spring aan die werk. Die hele tyd sê hy g'n woord nie. Hy was ammelee so vitterig en vol beginsels.

Toe haal ek ook maar 'n skopgraaf uit en ons val daar weg en werk dat dit sulke opslae maak. Omtrent 'n halfuur lank hou ons so aan— langer kon ons dit ook nie volhou nie, maar teen dié tyd was die gat darem al goed besig om te sak. Toe ek eindelijk weer bo in die kamer terugkom, kyk ek by die venster uit en sien hoe Tom sukkel om teen die weerligafleier op te klouter: maar hy maak net g'n hond haaraf nie, sy hande is te seer.

Eindelijk sê hy: „Nee wat, dit kan net nie gedoen word nie. Wat dink jy moet ek nou maak ? Kan jy nie aan 'n plan dink nie ?”

„Ek kan,” se ek. „Maar ek skat dis teen die reels. Jy kan met die trap opkom en maak of dit die afleier is."

En toe doen hy dit.

Die volgende dag het Tom 'n lepel en 'n koperblaker uit die huis gesteel om vir Jim 'n paar penne te maak; en verder ook nog ses waskerse. Intussen het ek daar tussen die negerhutte rondgedrentel en my kans afgewag en drie blikborde vasgelê. Tom het gesê dis nie genoeg nie, maar ek het gesê niemand sal tog ooit die borde sien wat Jim uitgooi nie, want hulle sou tussen die vinkel en die kakiebos onderkant die venstergat val—dan kon ons hulle weer daar gaan uithaal en oor en oor gebruik. Daarmee was Tom tevrede.

Toe sê hy: „Wat ons nou moet besluit, is hoe ons die goed by Jim gaan kry."

„Ons vat hulle deur die gat nes ons dié klaar gegrawe het,” sê ek.

Hy kyk my minagtend aan en brom iets van 'n verspote gedagte en begin toe self dink. Na 'n rukkie kondig hy aan dat hy twee of drie planne het, maar dat dit nog nie nodig is om tussen hulle te kies nie. Ons moet eers by Jim uitkom.

Dié aand is ons skuins na tienuur teen die weerligafleier af, met een van die kerse byderhand; ons het onder die venster gaan luister en kon Jim

duidelik hoor snork. Toe gooi ons die kers in en dit maak hom nie eers wakker nie. En toe val ons weer weg met pik en graaf en ná sowat twee en 'n halfuur was die werk klaar. Ons het onder Jim se katel uitgekruip en toe in die hut beland en rondgevoel tot ons die kers kry, en dit aangesteek en 'n rukkie vir Jim staan en beskou. Hy't blakend gesond gelyk. Eindelik het ons hom suutjies en versigtig wakker gemaak. Hy was so bly om ons te sien dat hy amper begin huil het; en hy't ons 'n hele rits troetelnaampies genoem. En hy wou hê ons moet net daar en dan 'n beitel loop soek en die ketting van sy been afkap en hom help om sonder versuim weg te kom. Maar Tom het hom oortuig dat dit teen die reëls sou wees en hom toe van al ons planne vertel en hom verseker dat ons alles dadelik kon verander as daar dalk gevaar kom. Hy hoef dus niks bang te wees nie, want ons sal vir seker sorg dat hy wegkom. Daarmee was Jim doodtevrede, en 'n ruk lank het ons daar sit en gesels oor die ou dae, en Tom het 'n spul vroeë gevra, en toe't Jim hom vertel dat oom Silas elke dag of wat daar na hom toe kom om saam met hom te bid, en dat tant Sally gereeld kom kyk het of dit nog goed gaan met hom en of hy genoeg kry om te eet, en dat hulle altwee vreeslik gaaf was.

Toe hy dít sê, sê Torn dadelik: „Nou weet ek wat ons gaan doen. Ons sal vir jou 'n paar goedjies saam met hulle stuur.”

„Moenie!” keer ek. „Is jy nou heeltemal van jou wysie af?”

Maar moenie dink hy luister na my nie: hy hou net een stryk aan met praat. Só was hy maar altyd as hy eenmaal op 'n ding besluit het.

En hy vertel vir Jim hoe ons die touleer in 'n pastei sal moet stuur, en 'n paar ander groot goed saam met Ned, die slaaf wat sy kos bring; en dat hy sy oë maar moet oophou en nie verbaas wees nie, en sorg dat Ned nooit sien as hy die goed oopmaak nie. En verder sou hy klein goedjies in sy oom se sakke steek sodat Jim hulle daar kon uitsteel; en ander goed sal ons aan tant Sally se voorskootbande vasbind of in haar voorskootsak steek as ons 'n kansie kry; en hy vertel vir Jim haarfyn wat se goed dit alles sal wees en waarvoor hulle gebruik moet word. En hy sê vir hom hoe hy 'n dagboek met sy bloed op die hemp moet hou. Hy lê alles vir hom uit. Jim kon g'n sin in die meeste daarvan sien nie, maar hy't gereken die witmense weet seker beter as hy, dus was hy doodtevrede en het hy belowe om alles te doen wat Tom sê.

Jim het heelwat mieliestronkpype en twak daar by hom gehad, dus het ons die tydjie nou sommer deur-en-deur geniet; daarna het ons teruggekruip deur die gat en teruggeglip huis toe met hande wat lyk asof iets aan hulle gekou het. Tom was in sy noppies. Hy't gesê dis die meeste wat hy nog ooit iets in sy lewe geniet het; dit was die slimste streek wat hy nog ooit uitgehaal het. En as hy net 'n uitweg kon prakseer, dan sou hy sorg dat ons vir die res van ons lewe daarmee besig bly en dit aan ons kinders oorlaat om Jim daar uit te haal —want hy was seker Jim sou al meer en meer daarvan begin hou nes hy eenmaal daaraan gewoond is. Hy was oortuig daarvan dat mens dit op dié manier tot tagtig jaar toe kon uitrek, dan sou dit die langste tyd in die geskiedenis wees. En dit sou almal van ons wat daarmee te doene gehad het,

wêreldberoemd maak.

Die volgende more het ons by die houthoop die koperblaker in 'n klomp gerieflike stukkies gekap, en dit het Tom saam met die lepel in sy sak gestee. Daarna is ons na die negerhutte toe en terwyl ek Ned se aandag aftrek, druk Tom 'n stuk blaker binne-in die mieliebrood op Jim se pan; en toe loop ons saam met Ned om te sien hoe dit werk. En dit het eenvoudig skitterend gewerk, want toe Jim daaraan byt, het hy omtrent al wat tand in sy mond was, gebreek; beter kon dit net nie—Tom het self so gesê. Jim het maar net gemaak of dit 'n stukkie klip of iets was soos wat mens gewoonlik in brood kry; maar daarná het hy nooit weer sommer aan 'n ding gaan staan en hap voor hy dit nie eers 'n paar steke met sy vurk gegee het nie.

Terwyl ons nog daar in die dowwe lig staan, hier kom 'n paar honde onder Jim se bed uitgestorm—en hulle hou áán met kom tot- dat daar elf van hulle is; daar was later skaars genoeg plek om asem te haal. Ek en Tom het so wrintie vergeet om die buitekamer se deur behoorlik toe te maak. Ned, die slaaf, gee net een skree—„Hekse!”—en hy slaan daar tussen die honde op die vloer neer en begin kerm asof hy aan die doodgaan is. Tom gryp vinnig 'n stuk van Jim se vleis, pluk die deur oop en gooi dit uit, en al die honde storm agterna; soos jy sê mes is Tom self ook uit en hy maak die deur agter hom toe. Toe weet ek sommer hy gaan nou die ander deur ook toemaak. Daarna kom hy terug na die slaaf toe en paai hom en praat mooi met hom en vra hom of hy hom weer verbeel het dat hy iets sien.

Hy staan op, knip sy oë 'n slag in die rondte en sê: „Baas Sid, jy sal nou sê ek's mal, maar ekket so waar wragtig gesiet dat daar ampertjies 'n miljoen honne of duiwels of goed hier inkom. Sowaar, ek val dood neer as ek lieg. Ekket hulle *gesien*. Baas Sid, ekket hulle *gevoel*, hulle't my skoon onnerstebo geloop. Ek sweer as ek net één slag een van daai hekse innie hanne kry—net één slag, dis al wat ek vra. Maar ek wens nóg liewerster hulle wil jintemal van my af pád- gee.”

„Moet ek jou sê wat ék dink? Hoekom dink jy kom hulle hier in nes dit dié slaaf se etenstyd is? Dis omdat hulle honger is, dis hoekom. En moet ek vir jou sê wat jý moet doen? Jy moet vir hulle 'n hekspastei maak.”

„Maar jinning, baas Sid, hoe gaat ék vir hulle 'n hekspaai maak? Ek weet mossie hoe nie. Ekket nog nooit so iets van 'n ding geleer nie.”

„Nou ja, dan sal ek dit maar self moet maak.”

„Sal jy, my goeiste basie? Sal jy? Ek sallie grond onner jou voete aanbid. Ek sweer dit!”

„Nou goed, ek sal dit vir jóú doen omdat jy goed was vir ons en ons die wegloopslaaf gewys het. Maar jy moet in jou spoor trap. As ons naby jou kom, moet jy jou rug draai. En jy mag niks sien wat ons in die pan sit nie. En jy mag ook nie kyk as Jim die pan leegmaak nie, want dan kan iets dalk met jou gebeur—ek weet nie wát nie. En die belangrikste van alles is: jy mag nooit aan die heksegoed vat nie.” „Aan hulle *vat*, baas Sid ? Hoe praat jy nou

? Jy kan my tien- honderdduisendbiljoen dollars gee, ek sal g'n vat aan die goed nie."

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That was all fixed. So then we went away and went to the rubbage-pile in the back yard where they keep the old boots, and rags, and pieces of bottles, and wore-out tin things, and all such truck, and scratched around and found an old tin washpan and stopped up the holes as well as we could, to bake the pie in, and took it down cellar and stole it full of flour, and started for breakfast and found a couple of shingle-nails that Tom said would be handy for a prisoner to scabble his name and sorrows on the dungeon walls with, and dropped one of them in Aunt Sally's apron pocket which was hanging on a chair, and t'other we stuck in the band of Uncle Silas's hat, which was on the bureau, because we heard the children say their pa and ma was going to the runaway nigger's house this morning, and then went to breakfast, and Tom dropped the pewter spoon in Uncle Silas's coat pocket, and Aunt Sally wasn't come yet, so we had to wait a little while.

And when she come she was hot, and red, and cross, and couldn't hardly wait for the blessing; and then she went to sluicing out coffee with one hand and cracking the handiest child's head with her thimble^{e1} with the other, and says:

"I've hunted high, and I've hunted low, and it does beat all, what *has* become of your other shirt."

My heart fell down amongst my lungs and livers and things, and a hard piece of corn-crust started down my

throat after it and got met on the road with a cough and was shot across the table and took one of the children in the eye and curled him up like a fishing-worm, and let a cry out of him the size of a war-whoop, and Tom he turned kinder blue around the gills, and it all amounted to a considerable state of things for about a quarter of a minute or as much as that, and I would a sold out for half price if there was a bidder. But after that we was all right again—it was the sudden surprise of it that knocked us so kind of cold. Uncle Silas he says:

“It’s most uncommon curious, I can’t understand it. I know perfectly well I took it *off*, because—”

“Because you hain’t got but one *on*. Just *listen* at the man! I know you took it off, and know it by a better way than your wool-gathering memory, too, because it was on the clo’es-line yesterday—I see it there myself. But it’s gone—that’s the long and the short of it, and you’ll just have to change to a red flann’l one till I can get time to make a new one. And it’ll be the third I’ve made in two years; it just keeps a body on the jump to keep you in shirts; and whatever you do manage to *do* with ’m all, is more’n I can make out. A body’d think you *would* learn to take some sort of care of ’em, at your time of life.”

“I know it, Sally, and I do try all I can. But it oughtn’t to be altogether my fault, because you know I don’t see them nor have nothing to do with them except when they’re on me; and I don’t believe I’ve ever lost one of them *off* of me.”

“Well, it ain’t *your* fault if you haven’t, Silas—you’d a

done it if you could, I reckon. And the shirt ain't all that's gone, nuther. Ther's a spoon gone; and *that* ain't all. There was ten, and now ther's only nine. The calf got the shirt I reckon, but the calf never took the spoon, *that's* certain."

"Why, what else is gone, Sally?"

"Ther's six *candles* gone—that's what. The rats could a got the candles, and I reckon they did; I wonder they don't walk off with the whole place, the way you're always going to stop their holes and don't do it; and if they warn't fools they'd sleep in your hair, Silas—you'd never find it out; but you can't lay the *spoon* on the rats, and that I *know*."

"Well, Sally, I'm in fault, and I acknowledge it; I've been remiss; but I won't let to-morrow go by without stopping up them holes."

"Oh, I wouldn't hurry, next year'll do. Matilda Angelina Araminta *Phelps!*"

Whack comes the thimble, and the child snatches her claws out of the sugar-bowl without fooling around any. Just then, the nigger woman steps onto the passage, and says:

"Missus, dey's a sheet gone."

"A *sheet* gone! Well, for the land's sake!"

"I'll stop up them holes *to-day*," says Uncles Silas, looking sorrowful.

"Oh, *do* shet up!—spose the rats took the *sheet*? *Where's* it gone, Lize?"

“Clah to goodness I hain’t no notion, Miss Sally. She wuz on de clo’s-line yistiddy, but she done gone; she ain’ dah no mo’, now.”

“I reckon the world *is* coming to an end. I *never* see the beat of it, in all my born days. A shirt, and a sheet, and a spoon, and six can——”

“Missus,” comes a young yaller wench^{e2}, “dey’s a brass cannelstick miss’n.”

“Cler out from here, you hussy, or I’ll take a skillet to ye!”

Well, she was just a biling. I begun to lay for a chance; I reckoned I would sneak out and go for the woods till the weather moderated. She kept a raging right along, running her insurrection all by herself, and everybody else mighty meek and quiet; and at last Uncle Silas, looking kind of foolish, fishes up that spoon out of his pocket. She stopped, with her mouth open and her hands up; and as for me, I wished I was in Jerusalem or somewheres. But not long; because she says:

“It’s *just* as I expected. So you had it in your pocket all the time; and like as not you’ve got the other things there, too. How’d it get there?”

“I reely don’t know, Sally,” he says, kind of apologizing, “or you know I would tell. I was a-studying over my text in Acts Seventeen^{e3}, before breakfast, and I reckon I put it in there, not noticing, meaning to put my Testament in, and it must be so, because my Testament ain’t in, but I’ll go and see, and if the Testament is where I had it, I’ll know I didn’t put it in, and that will show that I laid the Testament down and

took up the spoon, and——”

“Oh, for the land’s sake! Give a body a rest! Go ’long now, the whole kit and biling of ye; and don’t come nigh me again till I’ve got back my peace of mind.”

I’d a heard her, if she’d a said it to herself, let alone speaking it out; and *I’d* a got up and obeyed her, if *I’d* a been dead. As we was passing through the setting-room, the old man he took up his hat, and the shingle-nail fell out on the floor, and he just merely picked it up and laid it on the mantel-shelf, and never said nothing, and went out. Tom see him do it, and remembered about the spoon, and says:

“Well, it ain’t no use to send things by *him* no more, he ain’t reliable.” Then he says: “But he done us a good turn with the spoon, anyway, without knowing it, and so we’ll go and do him one without *him* knowing it—stop up his rat-holes.”

There was a noble good lot of them, down cellar, and it took us a whole hour, but we done the job tight and good, and ship-shape. Then we heard steps on the stairs, and blowed out our light, and hid; and here comes the old man, with a candle in one hand and a bundle of stuff in t’other, looking as absent-minded as year before last. He went a mooning around, first to one rat-hole and then another, till he’d been to them all. Then he stood about five minutes, picking tallow-drip off his candle and thinking. Then he turns off slow and dreamy towards the stairs, saying:

“Well, for the life of me I can’t remember when I done it. I could show her now that I warn’t to blame on account of the rats. But never mind—let it go. I reckon

it wouldn't do no good."

And so he went on a mumbling up stairs, and then we left. He was a mighty nice old man. And always is.

Tom was a good deal bothered about what to do for a spoon, but he said we'd got to have it; so he took a think. When he had ciphered it out, he told me how we was to do; then we went and waited around the spoon-basket till we see Aunt Sally coming, and then Tom went to counting the spoons and laying them out to one side, and I slid one of them up my sleeve, and Tom says:

"Why, Aunt Sally, there ain't but nine spoons, *yet*."

She says:

"Go 'long to your play, and don't bother me. I know better, I counted 'm myself."

"Well, I've counted them twice, Aunty, and I can't make but nine."

She looked out of all patience, but of course she come to count—anybody would.

"I declare to gracious ther' *ain't* but nine!" she says. "Why, what in the world—plague *take* the things, I'll count 'm again."

So I slipped back the one I had, and when she got done counting, she says:

"Hang the troublesome rubbage, ther's *ten*, now!" and she looked huffy and bothered both. But Tom says:

“Why, Aunt, / don’t think there’s ten.”

“You numskull, didn’t you see me *count* ’m?”

“I know, but——”

“Well, I’ll count ’m *again*.”

So I smouched one, and they come out nine same as the other time. Well, she *was* in a tearing way—just a trembling all over, she was so mad. But she counted and counted³¹, till she got that addled she’d start to count-in the *basket* for a spoon, sometimes; and so, three times they come out right, and three times they come out wrong. Then she grabbed up the basket and slammed it across the house and knocked the cat galley-west; and she said cle’r out and let her have some peace, and if we come bothering around her again betwixt that and dinner, she’d skin us. So we had the odd spoon; and dropped it in her apron pocket whilst she was a giving us our sailing-orders, and Jim got it all right, along with her shingle-nail, before noon. We was very well satisfied with this business, and Tom allowed it was worth twice the trouble it took, because he said *now* she couldn’t ever count them spoons twice alike again to save her life; and wouldn’t believe she’d counted them right, if she *did*; and said that after she’d about counted her head off, for the next three days, he judged she’d give it up and offer to kill anybody that wanted her to ever count them any more.

So we put the sheet back on the line, that night, and stole one out of her closet; and kept on putting it back and stealing it again, for a couple of days, till she didn’t know how many sheets she had, any more, and said she didn’t *care*, and warn’t agoing to bullyrag the rest

of her soul out about it, and wouldn't count them again not to save her life, she druther die first.

So we was all right now, as to the shirt and the sheet and the spoon and the candles, by the help of the calf and the rats and the mixed-up counting; and as to the candlestick, it warn't no consequence, it would blow over by-and-by.

But that pie was a job; we had no end of trouble with that pie. We fixed it up away down in the woods, and cooked it there; and we got it done at last, and very satisfactory, too; but not all in one day; and we had to use up three washpans full of flour, before we got through, and we got burnt pretty much all over, in places, and eyes put out with the smoke; because, you see, we didn't want nothing but a crust, and we couldn't prop it up right, and she would always cave in. But of course we thought of the right way at last; which was to cook the ladder, too, in the pie. So then we laid in with Jim, the second night, and tore up the sheet all in little strings, and twisted them together, and long before daylight we had a lovely rope, that you could a hung a person with. We let on it took nine months to make it.

And in the forenoon we took it down to the woods, but it wouldn't go in the pie. Being made of a whole sheet, that way, there was rope enough for forty pies, if we'd a wanted them, and plenty left over for soup, or sausage, or anything you choose. We could a had a whole dinner.

But we didn't need it. All we needed was just enough for the pie, and so we throwed the rest away. We didn't

cook none of the pies in the washpan, afraid the solder would melt; but Uncle Silas he had a noble brass warming-pan which he thought considerable of, because it belonged to one of his ancestors with a long wooden handle that come over from England with William the Conqueror in the *Mayflower* or one of them early ships and was hid away up garret with a lot of other old pots and things that was valuable, not on account of being any account because they warn't, but on account of them being relicts, you know, and we snaked her out, private, and took her down there, but she failed on the first pies, because we didn't know how, but she come up smiling on the last one. We took and lined her with dough, and set her in the coals, and loaded her up with rag-rope, and put on a dough roof, and shut down the lid, and put hot embers on top, and stood off five foot, with the long handle, cool and comfortable, and in fifteen minutes she turned out a pie that was a satisfaction to look at. But the person that et it would want to fetch a couple of kags of toothpicks along, for if that rope-ladder wouldn't cramp him down to business, I don't know nothing what I'm talking about, and lay him in enough stomach-ache to last him till next time, too.

Nat didn't look, when we put the witch-pie in Jim's pan; and we put the three tin plates in the bottom of the pan under the vittles; and so Jim got everything all right, and as soon as he was by himself he busted into the pie and hid the rope-ladder inside of his straw tick, and scratched some marks on a tin plate and throwed it out of the window-hole.

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Dié saak was nou mooi agtermekaar. Dus is ons daar weg na die ashoop in die agterplaas waar al die ou skoene en lappe en bottelstukke en voos ou blikware en sulke goed gebêre word, en ons vroetel daar rond tot ons 'n ou blikskottel kry. Ons stop die ding se gate toe, so goed as wat ons kan, sodat mens darem 'n pastei daarin kan bak, en ons neem dit kelder toe en steel dit vol meel, en toe draf ons om betyds vir oggendete te wees en onderweg kry ons 'n paar ou dik spykers wat volgens Tom handig sou wees vir 'n bandiet om sy naam en al sy smarte teen sy kerkmure uit te krap, en ons laat een van hulle in tant Sally se voorskootsak glip waar dit oor 'n stoel hang, en die ander steek ons in oom Silas se hoed se band in, wat in die studeerkamer lê, want ons het gehoor dat die kinders sê hulle pa en ma gaan vanoggend na die wegloopslaaf kyk, en toe gaan eet ons en Tom laat die lepel in oom Silas se baadjiesak gly. Tant Sally was nog nie daar nie, dus moes ons eers 'n rukkie sit en wag.

Toe sy eindelijk opdaag, was sy sommer warm en rooi en kwaad, en sy kon skaars wag dat die seen gevra word; toe begin sy met die een hand koffie skink, en met 'n vingerhoed aan die ander hand klop sy die naaste kind op sy kop, en sy sê:

„Ek het nou orals gesoek, maar ek kan net nie daardie ander hemp van jou kry nie.”

Ek voel hoe my hart hier onder tussen my longe en my lewer en goed inval, en 'n harde stukkie mieliebroodkorsie glip in my keel af en halfpad bots hy teen 'n hoes en skiet weer uit—dwarsoor die tafel en binne-in een van die kinders se oog, sodat hy opkrul soos 'n vis- wurm en 'n skree gee wat omtrent soos 'n oorlogskreet klink; en Tom word blouërigh om die kiewe, en omtrent 'n kwartminuut lank is daar 'n hele kabaal aan tafel; en as daar net 'n kansie was, dan het ek sonder versuim boedel oorgegee. Maar daarna was alles weer dood- reg—dit was net die skielike verrassing wat ons winduit geslaan het.

Oom Silas sê: „Dis regtig baie snaaks. Ek kan dit net nie verstaan nie. Ek weet baie goed dat ek die hemp *uitgetrek* het, want. . .” „Natuurlik, want jy't net een aan. Jy kan tog bog praat. *Ek* weet ook jy't dit uitgetrek en ek weet dit heelwat beter as jý met jou ver- geterigheid, want dit het gister aan die wasgoeddraad gehang—dit het ek met my eie oe gesien. En nou's hy weg, dis al; en jy sal nou maar net mooitjies 'n rooi flennie-een moet dra tot tyd en wyl ek 'n nuwe een gemaak het. Dit sal die derde hemp wees wat ek in twee jaar gemaak het; mens moet sowaar bontstaan om te sorg dat jý hemde het; en die vadertjie weet wat máák jy met die goed, ék weet nie. Mens sou dink iemand van jou jare sou darem al geleer het hoe om hulle 'n bietjie op te pas.”

„Ek weet, Sally, en ek doen eerlikwaar my bes. Maar dit kan tog nie net my skuld wees nie, want jy weet tog ek het niks met die goed te doen as ek

hulle nie aanhet nie; en ek kan nie onthou dat ek al een van hulle van my lyf af verloor het nie.”

„Dis ook nie jou skuld dat dit nog nie gebeur het nie, Silas. Jy sou dit regkry as jy net kon, as jy my vra. En dis ook nie net die hemp wat weg is nie. Daar’s ’n lepel ook weg; en dis ook nog nie al nie. Daar was tien van hulle, nou’s daar net nege. Ek skat die kalf is seker vort met die hemp, maar een ding is seker: hy’s nie vort met die *lepel* nie.” „Maar wat makeer daar dan nóg, Sally?”

„Ses *kerse*, dis wat makeer. Dalk het die rotte hulle gesteel, dis wat ek reken. Dis snaaks dat hulle nog nie die hele huis hier weggedra het soos wat jy alewig belowe om hulle gate toe te stop en dit dan nooit doen nie. As hulle nie so onnosel was nie, dan’t hulle lankal in jou hare begin nesmaak, Silas—jý sal dit nooit eers weet nie. Maar die rotte kon ook nie die *lepel* weggedra het nie.”

„Ek is jammer, Sally. Dis my skuld. Ek was agtelosig. Maar net more stop ek al hulle gate toe.”

„O, jy hoef nie haastig te wees nie. Volgende jaar is ook nog tyd. Matilda Angelina Araminta *Phelps!*” En *ka-plaks* beland die vingerhoed op ’n kop en dadelik ruk die kind haar hande uit die suikerpot uit.

Net toe verskyn die negervrou onder die afdak en sê: „Mies, daar’s ’n lakent weg.”

„’n *Laken*? Nee, my jinne dan tog!”

„Ek sal nog *vandag* die gate gaan toestop,” belowe oom Silas druiptert.

„Hou tog jou snater. Dink jy miskien die rotte het die laken weggedra? Wáár’t hy weggeraak, Liza?”

„Nee, gits, mies, ék weet tog nie. Hy’t gister nog oppie draad ge- hang, nou’t hy geverdwyn.”

„Die einde van die wêreld is nie meer ver nie. Ek het in my lewens- dag nog nie sowat gesien nie. ’n Hemp, en ’n laken, en ’n lepel en ses ker . . .”

„Mies!” roep ’n jongerige geel meidjie. „Daar makeer ’n koper- blaker.”

„Maak dat jy hier uitkom, jou klein nikswerd, of ek gee jou sommer ’n oorveeg!”

Nou was sy behoorlik aan die kook. Ek het begin loer of daar nie dalk ’n kansie aanbreek om uit te glip bosse toe en daar te gaan weg- kruip tot tyd en wyl sy weer ’n bietjie afgekoel het nie. Sy’t een stryk deur bly raas en skel, net so op haar eentjie, terwyl die ander almal tjoepstil en onderdanig bly sit. En na ’n ruk steek oom Silas toe sy hand in sy baadjiesak en met ’n skaperige gesig haal hy die lepel daaruit. Sy steek vas, met haar mond nog wydooop en haar arms in die lug; en op daardie oomblik wens ek ek was maar liewerster in Jerusalem of êrens. Maar ook nie vir lank nie, want toe sê sy;

„Dis nes ek verwag het. Jy dra dit heeltyd in jou sak. Ek sal glad nie verbaas wees as jy die ander goed ook daar by jou het nie. Hoe’t dit daar gekom?”

„Ek weet regtig nie, Sally,” sê hy half skoorvoetend. „Jy weet mos ek sou vir jou gesê het as ek geweet het. Ek het voor brekfis my teks in Handeling

Sewentien gesit en oorlees en toe't ek dit seker per ongeluk in my sak gesteeek in plaas van my Testament. Dis sekerlik wat gebeur het, want my Testament is nie in die sak nie. Maar ek sal gou gaan kyk, en as die Testament nog daar lê waar ek hom neerge- sit het, dan sal ek weet ek het hom nie in my sak gesteeek nie; en dit sal bewys dat ek die Testament daar laat lê het en die lepel .

„Jinne dan tog, dis nou genoeg! Toe skoert julle nou, die hele klomp van julle, en moenie weer naby my kom voor ek nie weer bedaar het nie.”

Ek sou dit gedoen het seifs al het sy dit nooit eers hardop gesê nie; ek kon dood daar gesit het, dan sou ek nóg gemaak het dat ek daar uitkom. Toe ons deur die sitkamer loop, teldie oubaas sy hoed op en, die spyker val op die vloer, en hy tel dit op en sit dit op die kaggelrak, maar hy sê g'n dooie woord nie—loop net uit. Tom het dit raakgesien, weer van die lepel onthou, en gesê:

„Nou ja, dit gaan nie help om weer goed met hóm saam te stuur nie. Mens kan hom nie vertrou nie.” Daarna hervat hy: „Maar hy't ons darem 'n guns bewys met die lepel, sonder om dit te weet; dus kan ons nou weer vir hóm 'n klip uit die pad rol sonder dat hy dit weet—ons kan sy rotgate vir hom gaan toestop.”

Daar was 'n mag der menigte van die goed onder in die kelder en dit het ons 'n voile uur geneem, maar ons het sommer 'n eersteklas stuk werk daarvan gemaak. Toe't ons iemand op die trap hoor aan- kom en ons kers uitgeblaas en weggekrui; en hier kom die oubaas toe aan met 'n kers in die een hand en 'n spul toestopgoed in die ander hand, en hy lyk so vergeetagtig soos voorlaasjaar. Hy piekel heen en weer, van die een gat na die ander, tot hy by die laaste een kom. En toe bly hy omtrent vyf minute lank doodstil staan en dink terwyl die was al teen sy kers op hom afdrup. Eindelik draai hy stadig en dromerig terug na die trap en sê: „Nee kyk, ek kan nou glad nie onthou wanneer ek die goed toegestop het nie. Ek kan haar nou kom wýs dat dit nie my skuld was dat die rotte die goed wegdra nie. Maar toe maar wat. Vergeet maar daarvan. Dit sal tog niks help nie.” En mompel-mompel loop hy terug. Toe maak ons dat óns ook daar uitkom. Hy was 'n alte liewe oubaas. En hy is dit nog altyd.

Tom was taamlik bekommerd oor wat ons nou vir 'n lepel gaan gebruik, want ons móés dit glo hê. Dus het hy weer begin dink, en nadat hy dit uitgepluis het, het hy my sy plan vertel. Ons gaan toe na die lepelmandjie toe en bly daar rondrentel totdat tant Sally op- daag; toe begin Tom die lepels tel en hy pak hulle eenkant, en ek laat een van hulle in my mou inglip, en hy sê: „Maar tant Sally, hier's dan nog altyd net nege lepels ?”

„Loop speel,” sê sy. „Moenie vir my pla nie. Ek weet daar's tien, want ek het hulle self getel.”

„Maar ek het hulle twee keer oorgetel, tante, en ék kry net nege.”

Sy lyk taamlik ongeduldig, maar sy kom tog nader om hulle te tel —wie sou nie?

„So waar as wragtie,” sê sy. „Daar *is* net nege. Maar hoe op dees aarde . .

. Die vervlakste goed! Wag, laat ek oortel.”

Ek laat toe die een in my mou teruggly en toe sy klaar is, sê sy: „Die simpel goed, nou’s daar weer *tien!*” En sy sien daar taamlik kortasem en deur die wind uit.

Maar Tom hou vol: „Ek is seker daar’s nie tien nie, tante.”

„Maar jou pampoenkop, het jy dan nie *gesien* toe ek tel nie?”

„Ek weet, maar . . .”

„Nou toe, ek sal hulle wéér ’n slag tel.”

Ek gaps vinnig een, en daar kry sy toe weer nege nes die eerste keer. Tóé’s sy sommer behoorlik boos—bewe van skone woede. Maar sy hou aan met tel, oor en oor, tot sy naderhand so deur die wind is dat sy die mandjie tel vir ’n lepel; drie keer werk dit reg uit, en drie keer verkeerd. Toe tel sy die mandjie op en sy smyt dit dat dit daar trek en dit tref die kat dat hy hik; en sy boender ons daar uit en sê sy wil nou met rus gelaat word, en as ons weer voor middagete ’n voet in die huis sit, dan slag sy ons lewendig af. En so hét ons toe die lepel; en terwyl sy nog besig is om ons daar uit te ja, laat ons dit in haar voorskootsak inglip: en nog voor twaalfuur het Jim dit en die spyker veilig in die hande gekry. Ons was in ons noppies met die hele saak, en Tom het gesê dit was twee keer dié moeite werd, want nou sou sy nie gou weer die lepels oortel nie; en seifs al sóú sy, dan sou sy nog nie glo dat sy reg getel het nie. En daarna sou sy drie dae lank haar half besimpel tel aan die lepels en uiteindelik tou opgooi en dreig dat sy die een sal vermoor wat haar ooit weer vra om die goed te tel.

Dié nag het ons die laken weer aan die draad gehang en een uit die linnekas gegaps; en ’n paar dae lank het ons so aangehou met steel en terugsit, steel en terugsit, tot sy glad nie meer geweet het hoeveel lakens sy het nie en gesê het sy gee ook nie meer *om* nie; sy sou haar siel nie verder met ’n tellery loop versondig nie; sy sou liewerster doodgaan as om ooit weer aan die goed te begin tel.

Nou was alles dus in orde wat die hemp en die laken en die lepel en die kerse betref, danksy die kalf en die rotte en die deurmekaar tellery; en die blaker het tog nie juis saak gemaak nie—daarvan sou hulle gou-gou vergeet.

Maar die pastei was ’n gefoeter; ons het ’n ewigheid daarmee gesukkel. Ons het dit doer in die bosse gaargemaak, en uiteindelik was ons darem tevrede—maar dit het nie in één dag klaargekom nie en ons moes drie skottels meel gebruik voor dit klaar was; en in die proses het ons altwee op ’n hele spul plekke sleg verbrand en ons oë amper uitgerook gekry—want ons wou mos net ’n kors hê, en ons kon dit net nie reg opgestel kry nie; slag op slag het dit weer ingeval. Maar uiteindelik het ons die regte plan gekry: om die leer binne-in die pastei gaar te maak. Die tweede nag het ons dus daar by Jim gaan sit en die laken in lang repies geskeur en hulle almal aan mekaar vasgebind, en lank voor dagbreek het ons al ’n pragtige tou gehad waar-mee mens maklik iemand kon ophang. Ons het gemaak asof ons nege maande daaraan gewerk het.

In die loop van die oggend het ons dit bosse toe geneem, maar dit wou nie in die pastei pas nie. Want omdat dit van 'n hele laken gemaak was, was daar genoeg tou vir veertig pasteie, as ons hulle wou he—en seifs dan sou ons genoeg oorgehou het vir sop of wors of enigiets anders. Ons kon 'n hele voile maaltyd daarmee gekook het.

Maar ons wóú nie 'n hele voile maaltyd hê nie. Al wat ons wou he, was genoeg tou vir een pastei. Dus het ons die res maar weggegooi. Ons kon g'n pastei in die skottel gaarmaak nie, want dan sou die soldeersel dalk smelt; maar oom Silas het 'n pragtige koperpan gehad waarvoor hy baie lief was omdat dit glo aan sy voorouers behoort het, met 'n lang houthandvatsel wat saam met Willem die Veroweraar van Engeland af gekom het in die *Mayflower* of een van dié vroeë skippies; en die ding was bo-op die solder gebêre saam met 'n spul ander waardevolle potte en goed. Nie omdat dit enige nut gehad het nie, want dit hét nie, maar omdat dit relikwieë was, sien. En dié pan het ons toe stilletjies daar uitgesmokkel en bos toe gedra, maar die eerste paar pasteie het misluk omdat ons nog nie geweet het hoe om te werk te gaan nie. Maar die laaste een was pragtig. Ons het die pan met deeg uitgepleister en toe op die kole gesit, en toe lakentou inge- stop en 'n deegdeksel bo-op gemaak. Toe het ons dit toegemaak, en warm kole bo-op gegooi en vyf voet daarvandaan die lang hand- vatsel gestaan en vashou, so op ons dooie gemak. En vyftien minute later het ons 'n pastei gehad wat mens se hart laat lekker voel het. Maar die ou wat dit wou eet, sou 'n hele spul tandestokkies nodig gehad het, as hy nie wou hê daardie touleer moet hom met kramp plattrek en hom 'n maagpyn gee wat hy tot in lengte van dae sou onthou nie.

Ned het weggekyk toe ons die hekspastei in Jim se bord kom sit; en onder die kos het ons die drie blikborde ook ingeskuif. Jim het dus alles in die hande gekry. En sodra hy weer alleen was, het hy die pastei oopgebreek en die touleer in sy strooimatras weggesteek, en 'n paar merke op 'n blikbord gekrap en dit by die venster uitgegooi.

SECTION 38

Making them pens was a distressid-tough job, and so was the saw; and Jim allowed the inscription was going to be the toughest of all. That's the one which the prisoner has to scrabble on the wall. But we had to have it; Tom said we'd *got* to; there warn't no case of a state prisoner not scrabbling his inscription to leave behind, and his coat of arms.

"Look at Lady Jane Grey," he says; "look at Gilford Dudley; look at old Northumberland^{e1}! Why, Huck, spose it *is* considerble trouble?—what you going to do?—how you going to get around it? Jim's *got* to do his inscription and coat of arms. They all do."

Jim says:

"Why, Mars Tom, I hain't got no coat o' arms; I hain't got nuffn but dish-yer ole shirt, en you knows I got to keep de journal on dat."

"Oh, you don't understand, Jim; a coat of arms is very different."

"Well," I says, "Jim's right, anyway, when he says he hain't got no coat of arms, because he hain't."

"I reckon I knowed that," Tom says, "but you bet he'll have one before he goes out of this—because he's going out *right*, and there ain't going to be no flaws in his record."

So whilst me and Jim filed away at the pens on a

brickbat apiece, Jim a making his'n out of the brass and I making mine out of the spoon, Tom set to work to think out the coat of arms. By-and-by he said he'd struck so many good ones he didn't hardly know which to take, but there was one which he reckoned he'd decide on. He says:

"On the scutcheon we'll have a bend³²*or* in the dexter base, a saltire *murrey* in the fess, with a dog, couchant, for common charge, and under his foot a chain embattled, for slavery, with a chevron *vert* in a chief engrailed, and three invected lines on a field *azure*, with the nombril points rampant on a dancette indented; crest, a runaway nigger, *sable*, with his bundle over his shoulder on a bar sinister: and a couple of gules for supporters, which is you and me; motto, *Maggiore fretta, minore atto*^{e2}. Got it out of a book—means, the more haste, the less speed."

"Geewhillikins," I says, "but what does the rest of it mean?"

"We ain't got no time to bother over that," he says, "we got to dig in like all git-out."

"Well, anyway," I says, "what's *some* of it? What's a fess?"

"A fess—a fess is—*you* don't need to know what a fess is. I'll show him how to make it when he gets to it."

"Shucks, Tom," I says, "I think you might tell a person. What's a bar sinister?"

"Oh, / don't know. But he's got to have it. All the nobility does."

That was just his way. If it didn't suit him to explain a thing to you, he wouldn't do it. You might pump at him a week, it wouldn't make no difference.

He'd got all that coat of arms business fixed, so now he started in to finish up the rest of that part of the work, which was to plan out a mournful inscription—said Jim got to have one, like they all done. He made up a lot, and wrote them out on a paper, and read them off, so:

1. *Here a captive heart busted.*

2. *Here a poor prisoner, forsook by the world and friends, fretted out his sorrowful life.*

3. *Here a lonely heart broke, and a worn spirit went to its rest, after thirty-seven years of solitary captivity.*

4. *Here, homeless and friendless, after thirty-seven years of bitter captivity, perished a noble stranger, natural son of Louis XIV.*

Tom's voice trembled, whilst he was reading them, and he most broke down. When he got done, he couldn't no way make up his mind which one for Jim to scabble onto the wall, they was all so good; but at last he allowed he would let him scabble them all on. Jim said it would take him a year to scabble such a lot of truck onto the logs with a nail, and he didn't know how to make letters, besides; but Tom said he would block them out for him, and then he wouldn't have nothing to

do but just follow the lines. Then pretty soon he says:

“Come to think, the logs ain’t agoing to do; they don’t have log walls in a dungeon: we got to dig the inscriptions into a rock. We’ll fetch a rock.”

Jim said the rock was worse than the logs; he said it would take him such a pison long time to dig them into a rock, he wouldn’t ever get out. But Tom said he would let me help him do it. Then he took a look to see how me and Jim was getting along with the pens. It was most pesky tedious hard work and slow, and didn’t give my hands no show to get well of the sores, and we didn’t seem to make no headway, hardly. So Tom says:

“I know how to fix it. We got to have a rock for the coat of arms and mournful inscriptions, and we can kill two birds with that same rock. There’s a gaudy big grindstone down at the mill, and we’ll smouch it, and carve the things on it, and file out the pens and the saw on it, too.”

It warn’t no slouch of an idea; and it warn’t no slouch of a grindstone nuther; but we allowed we’d tackle it. It warn’t quite midnight, yet, so we cleared out for the mill, leaving Jim at work. We smouched the grindstone, and set out to roll her home, but it was a most nation tough job. Sometimes, do what we could, we couldn’t keep her from falling over, and she come mighty near mashing us, every time. Tom said she was going to get one of us, sure, before we got through. We got her half way; and then we was plumb played out, and most drownded with sweat. We see it warn’t no use, we got to go and fetch Jim. So he raised

up his bed and slid the chain off of the bed-leg, and wrapt it round and round his neck, and we crawled out through our hole and down there, and Jim and me laid into that grindstone and walked her along like nothing; and Tom superintended. He could out-superintend any boy I ever see. He knew how to do everything.

Our hole was pretty big, but it warn't big enough to get the grindstone through; but Jim he took the pick and soon made it big enough. Then Tom marked out them things on it with the nail, and set Jim to work on them, with the nail for a chisel and an iron bolt from the rubbage in the lean-to for a hammer, and told him to work till the rest of his candle quit on him, and then he could go to bed, and hide the grindstone under his straw tick and sleep on it. Then we helped him fix his chain back on the bed-leg, and was ready for bed ourselves. But Tom thought of something, and says:

"You got any spiders in here, Jim?"

"No, sah, thanks to goodness I hain't, Mars Tom."

"All right, we'll get you some."

"But bless you, honey, I doan' *want* none. I's afeard un um. I jis' 's soon have rattlesnakes aroun'."

Tom thought a minute or two, and says:

"It's a good idea. And I reckon it's been done. It *must* a been done; it stands to reason. Yes, it's a prime good idea. Where could you keep it?"

"Keep what, Mars Tom?"

"Why, a rattlesnake."

“De goodness gracious alive, Mars Tom! Why, if dey was a rattlesnake to come in heah, I’d take en bust right out thoo dat log wall, I would, wid my head.”

“Why, Jim, you wouldn’t be afraid of it, after a little. You could tame it.”

“*Tame* it!”

“Yes—easy enough. Every animal is grateful for kindness and petting, and they wouldn’t *think* of hurting a person that pets them. Any book will tell you that. You try—that’s all I ask; just try for two or three days. Why, you can get him so, in a little while, that he’ll love you; and sleep with you; and won’t stay away from you a minute; and will let you wrap him round your neck and put his head in your mouth.”

“*Please*, Mars Tom—*doan’* talk so! I can’t *stan’* it! He’d *let* me shove his head in my mouf—fer a favor, hain’t it? I lay he’d wait a pow’ful long time ’fo’ I *ast* him. En mo’ en dat, I doan’ *want* him to sleep wid me.”

“Jim, don’t act so foolish. A prisoner’s *got* to have some kind of a dumb pet, and if a rattlesnake hain’t ever been tried, why, there’s more glory to be gained in your being the first to ever try it than any other way you could ever think of to save your life.”

“Why, Mars Tom, I doan’ *want* no sich glory. Snake take ’n bite Jim’s chin off, den *whah* is de glory? No, sah, I doan’ want no sich doin’s.”

“Blame it, can’t you *try*? I only *want* you to try—you needn’t keep it up if it don’t work.”

“But de trouble all *done*, ef de snake bite me while I’s a tryin’ him. Mars Tom, I’s willin’ to tackle mos’ anything ’at ain’t onreasonable, but ef you en Huck fetches a rattlesnake in heah for me to tame, I’s gwyne to *leave*, dat’s *shore*.”

“Well, then, let it go, let it go, if you’re so bullheaded about it. We can get you some garter-snakes and you can tie some buttons on their tails, and let on they’re rattlesnakes, and I reckon that’ll have to do.”

“I k’n stan’ *dem*, Mars Tom, but blame’ ’f I couldn’t get along widout um, I tell you dat. I never knowed b’fo’, ’t was so much bother and trouble to be a prisoner.”

“Well, it *always* is, when it’s done right. You got any rats around here?”

“No, sah, I hain’t seed none.”

“Well, we’ll get you some rats.”

“Why, Mars Tom, I doan’ *want* no rats. Dey’s de dad-blamedest creturs to sturb a body, en rustle roun’ over ’im, en bite his feet, when he’s tryin’ to sleep, I ever see. No, sah, gimme g’yarther-snakes, ’f I’s got to have ’m, but doan’ gimme no rats, I ain’t got no use f’r um, skasely.”

“But Jim, you *got* to have ’em—they all do. So don’t make no more fuss about it. Prisoners ain’t ever without rats. There ain’t no instance of it. And they train them, and pet them, and learn them tricks, and they get to be as sociable as flies. But you got to play music to them. You got anything to play music on?”

“I ain’ got nuffin but a coase comb en a piece o’ paper, en a juice-harp^{e3}; but I reck’n dey wouldn’ take no stock in a juice-harp.”

“Yes they would. *They* don’t care what kind of music ’tis. A jews-harp’s plenty good enough for a rat. All animals like music—in a prison they dote on it. Specially, painful music; and you can’t get no other kind out of a jews-harp. It always interests them; they come out to see what’s the matter with you. Yes, you’re all right; you’re fixed very well. You want to set on your bed, nights, before you go to sleep, and early in the mornings, and play your jews-harp; play *The Last Link is Broken*—that’s the thing that’ll scoop a rat, quicker’n anything else: and when you’ve played about two minutes, you’ll see all the rats, and the snakes, and spiders, and things begin to feel worried about you, and come. And they’ll just fairly swarm over you, and have a noble good time.”

“Yes, *dey* will, I reck’n, Mars Tom, but what kine er time is *Jim* havin’? Blest if I kin see de pint. But I’ll do it ef I got to. I reck’n I better keep de animals satisfied, en not have no trouble in de house.”

Tom waited to think over, and see if there wasn’t nothing else; and pretty soon he says:

“Oh—there’s one thing I forgot. Could you raise a flower here, do you reckon?”

“I doan’ know but maybe I could, Mars Tom; but it’s tolable dark in heah, en I ain’ got no use f’r no flower, nohow, en she’d be a pow’ful sight o’ trouble.”

“Well, you try it, anyway. Some other prisoners has

done it.”

“One er dem big cat-tail-lookin’ mullen-stalks would grow in heah, Mars Tom, I reck’n, but she wouldn’ be wuth half de trouble she’d coss.”

“Don’t you believe it. We’ll fetch you a little one, and you plant it in the corner, over there, and raise it. And don’t call it mullen, call it Pitchiola³¹—that’s its right name, when it’s in a prison. And you want to water it with your tears.”

“Why, I got plenty spring water, Mars Tom.”

“You don’t *want* spring water; you want to water it with your tears. It’s the way they always do.”

“Why, Mars Tom, I lay I kin raise one er dem mullen-stalks twyste wid spring water whiles another man’s a *start’n* one wid tears.”

“That ain’t the idea. You *got* to do it with tears.”

“She’ll die on my han’s, Mars Tom, she sholy will; kase I doan’ skasely ever cry.”

So Tom was stumped. But he studied it over, and then said Jim would have to worry along the best he could with an onion. He promised he would go to the nigger cabins and drop one, private, in Jim’s coffee-pot, in the morning. Jim said he would “jis’ ’s soon have tobacker in his coffee;” and found so much fault with it, and with the work and bother of raising the mullen, and jews-harping the rats, and petting and flattering up the snakes and spiders and things, on top of all the other work he had to do on pens, and inscriptions, and

journals, and things, which made it more trouble and worry and responsibility to be a prisoner than anything he ever undertook, that Tom most lost all patience with him; and said he was just loadened down with more gaudier chances than a prisoner ever had in the world to make a name for himself, and yet he didn't know enough to appreciate them, and they was just about wasted on him. So Jim he was sorry, and said he wouldn't behave so no more, and then me and Tom shoved for bed.

Chapter 38

dit het omtrént 'n gesukkel afgegee om daar-die penne en die saag gemaak te kry; en Jim het gereken die skrywery gaan nog die heel swaarste wees. Dis nou die skrywery van die gevangene op die tronkmuur. Maar ons moes dit net hê; Tom het gesê dit *moet* gedoen word: want dit het nog nooit gebeur dat 'n bandiet wegvlug sonder om iets daar te skrywe en sy familiewapen daarby te teken nie.

„Kyk maar vir Lady Jane Grey,” het hy gesê. „En vir Gilford Dudley; en wat van ou Northumberland? Wat maak dit saak as dit 'n vreeslike moeite is, Huck ? Wat kan ons daaraan doen ? Ons kan nie daarby verbykom nie. Jim *moet* eenvoudig iets skryf en sy familie- wapen teken. Hulle doen dit almal.”

„Maar baas Tom, ek hét g'n familiewapen nie,” sê Jim. „Al wat ek het, is dié ou hemp, en jy weet ek moet my dagboek daarop maak.” „Jy verstaan tog nie, Jim. 'n Familiewapen het niks te doen met harnasse en goed nie.”

„Jim is tóg reg as hy sê hy't g'n familiewapen nie,” sê ek. „Want hy *het* nie.”

„Dink jy nie ek weet dit nie ?” vra Tom. „Maar ek wed jou hy sal een hê voor hy hier uitkom—want hy gaan op die *regte* manier hier uitkom, sonder enige skandvlekke op sy reputasie.”

Ek en Jim spring toe aan die werk met die vylery van die penne teen 'n stuk baksteen—Jim besig met een uit koper, en ek met een uit die lepel. Intussen sit Tom en prakseer 'n familiewapen. 'n Ruk later kondig hy aan dat hy soveel mooies uitgedink het dat hy beswaarlik tussen hulle kan kies, maar daar's darem een wat hom sommer baie aanstaan. En toe verduidelik hy hoogdrawend:

„Op die wapenskild, of dalk regs op die voetstuk, kan ons 'n kurwe maak, met 'n Boergondiese kruis in bruin op die dwarsbalk, en 'n lêende hond om waaksaamheid voor te stel, en 'n opgerolde ketting onder sy poot vir slawerny, met 'n groen randpatroon op 'n gekartel- de kopstuk, en drie geboë strepe op 'n asuurveld, met die nombril- punte steierend op 'n ingeduike vlak; wapen: 'n vluggende slaaf in donkerbruin met 'n bondel oor sy skouer aan 'n sinistêre staaf, en 'n paar kele om hom te stut—dis nou ek en jy; *lease: Maggiore fretta, minore atto*. Dit kom uit 'n boek uit en dit beteken hoe meer haas hoe minder spoed.”

„Goeiste genugtig,” sê ek. „Maar wat beteken al die ander goed?” „Ons het nie nou tyd om ons dááror te bekommer nie,” antwoord hy. „Ons moet net werk dat dit bars om dit klaar te kry.”

„Nou sê dan net vir my wat *party* van die goed is,” vra ek. „Wat vir 'n ding is die asuurveld?”

„Die asuurveld ... die asuurveld is ... jy hoef nie te weet wat 'n asuurveld is nie. Ek sal hom wys hoe om dit te doen as ons daarby kom.”

„Gits, Tom, jy kan mens darem sê,” klae ek. „Wat is 'n sinistêre staf?”

„Ek weet tog nie, man. Maar hy moet dit hê. Al die adel het dit.” Dis nou maar van hom. As hy nie 'n ding wil uitlê nie, dan doen hy dit net nie. Jy kan 'n week lank aan hom karring, dit sal niks help nie.

Eindelik het hy toe die familiewapen-affêre agtermekaar gehad en nou moes hy die res van sy werk gedoen kry: hy moes die sombere inskripsie vir die muur prakseer. Want Jim móés glo een hê, soos almal van hulle. Hy't 'n hele klomp uitgedink en hulle op 'n stuk papier neergeskryf, en dit toe vir my voorgelees, só:

1. *Hier het 'n verslaafde hart gebreek.*
2. *Hier het 'n arme gevangene, verlate van die wêreld en sy vriende, sy bittere lewe uitgeslyt.*
3. *Hier het 'n verlate hart gebreek en 'n moeë siel ter ruste gegaan ná sewe-en-dertig jaar van eensame gevangenskap.*
4. *Na sewe-en-dertig jaar van bittere gevangenskap het 'n edele vreemdeling, die onegte seun van Lodewyk XIV, sonder huis of vriend hier gesterwe.*

Tom se stem het gebewe terwyl hy dit voorlees en hy't amper in trane uitgebars. Toe hy klaar was daarmee, kon hy net nie besluit watter een ons vir Jim op die muur moes laat uitkrap nie, want hulle was almal so goed; maar uiteindelik het hy besluit dat Jim hulle álmal kon gebruik. Jim het gesê dit sou 'n hele jaar neem om sulke twak met 'n spyker op die balke uit te krap, en hy't buitendien nie geweet hoe om letters te maak nie. Maar Tom het gesê hy sal dit vir hom teken, dan kon Jim maar net al op die lyne langs krap.

Net daarna sê hy: „Nou't ek daaraan dink: ons kan mos nooit die balke gebruik nie. Waar't jy al ooit gehoor van houtmure in 'n ker- ker? Ons moet die inskripsies op 'n klip uitkrap. Ons sal 'n klip hier- natoe bring.”

'n Klip is nog erger as balke, het Jim gesê; hy sou só lank sukkel om die

woorde op 'n klip uit te krap, dat hy nooit daar sou uitkom nie. Maar Tom het gesê ek kan hom help. Toe't hy 'n slag kom kyk hoe ek en Jim vorder met ons penne. Dit was 'n peslike swaar werk en my arme seer hande het dit behoorlik gewaar—en met dit en al het ons nie juis veel vordering gemaak nie.

Toe sê Tom: „Ek weet. Ons moet 'n klip in die hande kry vir die familiewapen en die sombere inskripsies; ons kan twee voëls met een-en-dieselfde klip doodgooi. Daar's 'n gruweloselike groot maal- klip daar onder by die meul wat ons kan vaslê om die goed op uit te krap; en dan kan ons dit sommer gebruik om die penne en die saag reg te vyl.”

Dit was nou sommer 'n bak idee; maar dit was 'n bak klip ook. Maar ons het besluit om hom tóg by te dam. Dit was nog nie behoorlik middernag nie, dus is ons dadelik vort meul toe terwyl Jim aan- gaan met werk. Ons het die steen bygedam en die ding begin terugrol, maar dit was 'n onmoontlike stuk werk. Party slae, maak nie saak wát ons doen om te keer nie, het die klip eenvoudig omgeduiwel, en elke keer het dit ons so hittete vermorsel. Tom was seker een van ons gaan nog in die slag bly voor ons klaar is. Ons het halfpad gekom en amper in ons eie sweet verdrink, so poegaai was ons. Nee wat, daar was g'n ander raad nie: ons moes vir Jim gaan haal om te kom help. Ons het sy katel opgelig, die ketting afgehaal en dit 'n paar keer om sy nek gedraai, en toe't ons deur ons gat uitgekruip, en ek en Jim het die klip gepak en aangerol terwyl Tom voorman speel. Ek het nog nooit iemand gesien wat só kon voorman speel soos hy nie. Daar's niks wat hý nie kon doen nie.

Ons gat was taamlik groot, maar nie groot genoeg vir die maal- steen nie; maar Jim het 'n pik gevat en dit gou-gou groter gekap. Toe het Tom die goed met 'n spyker geteken en Jim het aan die werk gespring—met die spyker vir 'n beitel en 'n ystergrendel uit die buite- kamertjie vir 'n hamer. Ons het vir hom gesê om aan te hou tot sy kers gedaan is, dan kon hy gaan slaap en die maalklip onder sy strooimatrass bêre en daarop slaap. Ons het hom gehelp om weer sy ketting om die katelpoot vas te kry en besluit om self terug te staan bed se kant toe. Maar toe dink Tom skielik weer aan iets en hy sê:

„Het jy spinnekoppe hier, Jim?”

„Nee, baas. Dankievader tog nie, baas Tom.”

„Nou goed. Ons sal vir jou 'n klompie vang.”

„Maar kleinbaas, ek wil g'n spinnekoppe hê nie. Ek's bang vir hulle. Ek kan netsowel 'n ratelslang hier hê.”

Tom dink 'n rukkie ná, dan sê hy: „Dis 'n goeie plan. Ek skat dis al tevore gedoen. Dit *moes* gedoen gewees het—dit spreek vanself. Ja-nee, dis 'n bak plan daardie. Waar kan jy die ding bêre?”

„Wat bêre, baas Tom?”

„Die ratelslang, natuurlik.”

„Maar my allagoeiste dan tog, baas Tom! As daar 'n ratelslang hier inkom, dan loop ek los-los deur daai muur, kop eerste.”

„Nee wat, Jim, man, ná 'n rukkie sal jy niks meer bang wees vir die ding nie. Jy kan horn mak maak.”

„Mak maak!”

„Ja—doodmaklik. Alle diere is dankbaar as mens hulle mooi ver- sorg en hulle ’n bietjie vertroetel. Hulle sal nooit daaraan dink om iemand seer te maak wat hulle vertroetel nie. Enige boek sal jou dit sê. Probeer net—dis al wat ek jou vra: net vir twee of drie dae. Gits, jy sal horn só mak kan maak dat hy jou na ’n rukkie sal begin liefkry en by jou sal slaap en g’n oomblik van jou af sal weggaan nie. Dan sal hy jou toelaat om hom om jou nek te draai en sy kop in jou mond te steek.”

„Seblief, baas Tpm, moenie so praat nie! Ek kannit nie *hou* nie. Hy sal my toelaat om sy kop in my mond in te steek—vir ’n gunsie, hê? Ek kan jou nou al sê: hy sal lank wag voor ek hom vra om dit te doen. En ek wil ok g’n hê hy moet hier by my kom slaap nie.” „Moenie so domonnosel wees nie, Jim. ’n Gevangene *moet* ’n soort troeteldiertjie hê. En as niemand nog nooit ’n ratelslang probeer het nie, dan kan jy mos beroemder word op dié manier as op enige ander manier waar jy ooit aan kan dink!”

„Baas Tom, ek gee nie om vir sulke beroemdigheid nie. Nou-nou byt die slang Jim se ken af—en waar sit die beroemdigheid dán? Nee baas, ek hou my nie op met sulke goeters nie.”

„Maar, Jim, jy kan mos net *probeer*. Ek wil net hê jy moet probeer. Jy hoef nie daarmee aan te hou as dit nie werk nie.”

„Maar sê-nou hy byt my sos ek nog aan’t probeer is, baas Tom, waar sit ek dán ? Nee, ek sal amper enige ding doen wat nie onredelik is nie, maar as jy en Huck ’n ratelslang hier inbring lat ek hom moet mak maak, dan *loop* ek—dis al wat ek sê.”

„Nou goed dan, vergeet daarvan as jy jou dan wil snaaks hou. Ons kan vir jou ’n paar kousbandslangetjies bring, dan kan jy hulle sterte knoop en máák asof dit ratelslange is. Ek skat dis al wat ons dan maar kan doen.”

„Vir hulle siet ek kans, baas Tom, al sal ek nog liewerster lat hulle ok maar ytbly. Ekket nooit geweet dis so ’n gebodder om ’n bandiet vry te maak nie.”

„Dis *altyd* so as dit reg gedoen word. Het jy rotte hier?”

„Nee, baas. Niks gesiet nie.”

„Goed, ons sal vir jou ’n paar rotte bring.”

„Maar baas Tom, ek *willie* rotte hê nie. ’n Rot is die befoeterdste dierasie op dees aarde. Hy pla mens alewiglik, en hy hoi oor jou rond, en byt jou voetes jy wil slaap. Nee, basie, geef my maar liewerster daai kousbandslangetjies assit dan móét, maar los die rotte yt, ek wil hulle nie hê nie.”

„Maar jy móét hulle hê, Jim—álmal het rotte. Hou nou op om te redekawel daaroor. G’n gevangene is ooit sonder rotte nie: ek weet nie van één nie. Hulle maak hulle mak en troetel hulle en leer vir hulle tricks, en naderhand word hulle net sulke gesellige goed soos vlieë. Maar jy moet vir hulle musiek maak. Het jy iets om musiek mee te maak?”

„Net ’n growwe ou kam en ’n stuk pampier en ’n trompie. Maar ek glo nie hulle sal lyk van ’n trompie nie.”

„Natuurlik sal hulle. Hulle gee nie om wat se soort musiek dit is nie. 'n Trompie is goed genoeg vir 'n rot. Alle diere hou van musiek. In tronke is hulle eenvoudig versot daarop. Veral treurige musiek— en dis tog ál soort wat mens met 'n trompie kan maak. Hulle stel altyd daarin belang; en dan kom kyk hulle wat makeer jou. Nee, jy's doodreg, jy't alles wat jy nodig het. Nou moet jy saans voor jy gaan slaap, en vroemorens, op jou bed sit en op jou trompie speel. Speel vir hulle *Die laaste skakel is gebroke*—dis iets wat enige rot se hart dadelik sal steel. En binne twee minute sal jy sien al die rotte en slange en spinnekoppe en goed begin bekommerd raak oor jou en hulle kom nader. Hulle sal behoorlik swérm oor jou en jy sal jou gate uit geniet.”

„Ek skat hulle sal, baas Tom, maar wat van *Jim*? Ek kan g'n sêns daarin siet nie. Ma'k sal so maak as ek moet. Dis seker beterder ommie diere tevrede te hou as lat daar moles in die huis kom.”

Tom bly nog 'n rukkjie staan om goed te dink of daar niks anders is nie. En skielik sê hy: „O, een ding het ek vergeet. Dink jy jy sal 'n blom hier aan die groei kan kry?”

„Ek weet nie, baas Tom, maar dalk. Maar dis pekdonker hier, vir wat nou gaan lol met blomme? Die ding gaan net sônne maak.”

„Jy kan ten minste probeer. Heelwat ander gevangenes het dit gedoen.”

„Een van daai onkryde wat sos katstêre lyk, baas Tom, die sal hier groei. Maar hy sal ok nie die moeite werd wees nie.”

„Dis wat jy dink. Ons sal vir jou 'n kleintjie bring, dan kan jy hom daar in die hoek plant en grootmaak. En moenie dit onkruid noem nie, want as hy in die tronk groei, is sy regte naam Koningskruid. En jy moet hom met jou trane natmaak.”

„Maar ek kry oorgenog fonteinwater, baas Tom.”

„Jy kan nie fonteinwater gebruik nie, man. Dit moet met jou trane natgemaak word. Dis hoe hulle altyd maak.”

„Maar baas Tom, ek kan een van daai onkryde tweékeer met fonteinwater lat groei voorlat 'n anner man nog *begin* het met trane.”

„Dit maak nie saak nie. Jy móét hom met trane natmaak.”

„Dan sal ek hom ma' so siet doodgaan, baas Tom, want ek issie jys een wat hyl nie.”

Dít het Tom uitgeknikker. Maar hy't dit 'n rukkjie gestaan en her- kou, en toe sê hy Jim moet maar aansukkel met uie. Hy't belowe om die volgende oggend stilletjies uie by die negerhutte te gaan vaslê en dit in Jim se koffiekan te gooi. Hy sal eerder twak in sy koffie drink, het Jim geantwoord, en hy't so vitterig geraak daaroor, en oor die gemors om die onkruid te laat groei, en om vir die rotte trompie te speel, en om maats te maak en aan te karring met slange en spinne- koppe en goed—en dit nog behalwe al sy ander werk met die penne en die inskripsies en die dagboeke en goed, wat dit vir hom swaarder en erger gemaak het om 'n gevangene te wees as enigiets anders wat hy ooit aangepak het—dat Tom later amper sy humeur verloor het. Hier was hy besig om Jim te oorlaai met die wonderlikste kanse wat enige gevangene

op aarde nog gehad het om roem te verwerf, en hy waardeer dit nie eers nie. Dit was gemors op hom. Toe't Jim maar gesê hy's jammer, hy sal nie weer so maak nie, en ek en Tom is vort bed toe.

SECTION 39

In the morning we went up to the village and bought a wire rat trap and fetched it down, and unstopped the best rat-hole, and in about an hour we had fifteen of the bulliest kind of ones; and then we took it and put it in a safe place under Aunt Sally's bed. But while we was gone for spiders, little Thomas Franklin Benjamin Jefferson Elexander Phelps found it there, and opened the door of it to see if the rats would come out, and they did; and Aunt Sally she come in, and when we got back she was a standing on top of the bed raising Cain, and the rats was doing what they could to keep off the dull times for her. So she took and dusted us both with the hickry, and we was as much as two hours catching another fifteen or sixteen, drat that meddlesome cub, and they warn't the likeliest, nuther, because the first haul was the pick of the flock. I never see a like-lier lot of rats than what that first haul was.

We got a splendid stock of sorted spiders, and bugs, and frogs, and caterpillars, and one thing or another; and we like-to got a hornet's nest, but we didn't. The family was at home. We didn't give it right up, but staid with them as long as we could; because we allowed we'd tire them out or they'd got to tire us out, and they done it. Then we got allycumpain³² and rubbed on the places, and was pretty near all right again, but couldn't set down convenient. And so we went for the snakes, and grabbed a couple of dozen garters and house-snakes, and put them in a bag, and put it in our room, and by that time it was supper time, and a rattling good honest day's work; and hungry?—oh, no, I reckon not!

And there warn't a blessed snake up there, when we went back—we didn't half tie the sack, and they worked out, somehow, and left. But it didn't matter much, because they was still on the premises somewheres. So we judged we could get some of them again. No, there warn't no real scarcity of snakes about the house for a considerable spell. You'd see them dripping from the rafters and places, every now and then; and they generly landed in your plate, or down the back of your neck, and most of the time where you didn't want them. Well, they was handsome, and striped, and there warn't no harm in a million of them; but that never made no difference to Aunt Sally, she despised snakes, be the breed what they might, and she couldn't stand them no way you could fix it; and every time one of them flopped down on her, it didn't make no difference what she was doing, she would just lay that work down and light out. I never see such a woman. And you could hear her whoop to Jericho. You couldn't get her to take aholt of one of them with the tongs. And if she turned over and found one in bed, she would scramble out and lift a howl that you would think the house was afire. She disturbed the old man so, that he said he could most wish there hadn't ever been no snakes created. Why, after every last snake had been gone clear out of the house for as much as a week, Aunt Sally warn't over it yet; she warn't near over it; when she was setting thinking about something, you could touch her on the back of her neck with a feather and she would jump right out of her stockings. It was very curious. But Tom said all women was just so. He said they was made that way; for some reason or other.

We got a licking every time one of our snakes come in her way; and she allowed these lickings warn't nothing to what she would do if we ever loaded up the place again with them. I didn't mind the lickings, because they didn't amount to nothing; but I minded the trouble we had, to lay in another lot. But we got them laid in, and all the other things; and you never see a cabin as blithesome as Jim's was when they'd all swarm out for music and go for him. Jim didn't like the spiders, and the spiders didn't like Jim; and so they'd lay for him and make it mighty warm for him. And he said that between the rats, and the snakes, and the grindstone, there warn't no room in bed for him, skasely; and when there was, a body couldn't sleep, it was so lively, and it was always lively, he said, because *they* never all slept at one time, but took turn about, so when the snakes was asleep the rats was on deck, and when the rats turned in the snakes come on watch, so he always had one gang under him, in his way, and t'other gang having a circus over him, and if he got up to hunt a new place, the spiders would take a chance at him as he crossed over. He said if he ever got out, this time, he wouldn't ever be a prisoner again, not for a salary.

Well, by the end of three weeks, everything was in pretty good shape. The shirt was sent in early, in a pie, and every time a rat bit Jim he would get up and write a little in his journal whilst the ink was fresh; the pens was made, the inscriptions and so on was all carved on the grindstone; the bed-leg was sawed in two, and we had et up the sawdust, and it give us a most amazing stomach-ache. We reckoned we was all going to die, but didn't. It was the most undigestible sawdust I ever see; and Tom said the same. But as I

was saying, we'd got all the work done, now, at last; and we was all pretty much fagged out, too, but mainly Jim. The old man had wrote a couple of times to the plantation below Orleans to come and get their runaway nigger, but hadn't got no answer, because there warn't no such plantation; so he allowed he would advertise Jim in the St. Louis and New Orleans papers; and when he mentioned the St. Louis ones, it give me the cold shivers, and I see we hadn't no time to lose. So Tom said, now for the nonnamous letters.

"What's them?" I says.

"Warnings to the people that something is up. Sometimes it's done one way, sometimes another. But there's always somebody spying around, that gives notice to the governor of the castle. When Louis XVI. was going to light out of the Tooleries^{e1}, a servant girl done it. It's a very good way, and so is the nonnamous letters. We'll use them both. And it's usual for the prisoner's mother to change clothes with him, and she stays in, and he slides out in her clothes. We'll do that too."

"But looky here, Tom, what do we want to *warn* anybody for, that something's up? Let them find it out for themselves—it's their lookout."

"Yes, I know; but you can't depend on them. It's the way they've acted from the very start—left us to do *everything*. They're so confiding and mullet-headed they don't take notice of nothing at all. So if we don't *give* them notice, there won't be nobody nor nothing to interfere with us, and so after all our hard work and trouble this escape '11 go off perfectly flat: won't

amount to nothing—won't be nothing *to* it."

"Well, as for me, Tom, that's the way I'd like."

"Shucks," he says, and looked disgusted. So I says:

"But I ain't going to make no complaint. Anyway that suits you suits me. What you going to do about the servant-girl?"

"You'll be her. You slide in, in the middle of the night, and hook that yaller girl's frock."

"Why, Tom, that'll make trouble next morning; because of course she prob'bly hain't got any but that one."

"I know; but you don't want it but fifteen minutes, to carry the nonnamous letter and shove it under the front door,"

"All right, then, I'll do it; but I could carry it just as handy in my own togs."

"You wouldn't look like a servant-girl *then*, would you?"

"No, but there won't be nobody to see what I look like, *anyway*."

"That ain't got nothing to do with it. The thing for us to do, is just to do our *duty*, and not worry about whether anybody sees us do it or not. Hain't you got no principle at all?"

"All right, I ain't saying nothing; I'm the servant-girl. Who's Jim's mother?"

"I'm his mother. I'll hook a gown from Aunt Sally."

“Well, then, you’ll have to stay in the cabin when me and Jim leaves.”

“Not much. I’ll stuff Jim’s clothes full of straw and lay it on his bed to represent his mother in disguise, and Jim’ll take the nigger woman’s gown off of me and wear it^{e2}, and we’ll all evade together. When a prisoner of style escapes, it’s called an evasion^{e3}. It’s always called so when a king escapes, frinstance. And the same with a king’s son; it don’t make no difference whether he’s a natural one or an unnatural one.”

So Tom he wrote the nonnamous letter, and I smouched the yaller wench’s frock, that night, and put it on, and shoved it under the front door, the way Tom told me to. It said:

Beware. Trouble is brewing. Keep a sharp lookout.

UNKNOWN FRIEND.

Next night we stuck a picture which Tom drew in blood, of a skull and crossbones, on the front door; and next night another one of a coffin, on the back door. I never see a family in such a sweat. They couldn’t a been worse scared if the place had a been full of ghosts laying for them behind everything and under the beds and shivering through the air. If a door banged, Aunt Sally she jumped, and said “ouch!” if anything fell, she jumped and said “ouch!” if you happened to touch her, when she warn’t noticing, she done the same; she couldn’t face noway and be satisfied, because she allowed there was something behind her every time—so she was always a whirling around, sudden, and saying “ouch,” and before she’d get two-thirds around, she’d whirl back again, and say

it again; and she was afraid to go to bed, but she dasn't set up. So the thing was working very well, Tom said; he said he never see a thing work more satisfactory. He said it showed it was done right.

So he said, now for the grand bulge! So the very next morning at the streak of dawn we got another letter ready, and was wondering what we better do with it, because we heard them say at supper they was going to have a nigger on watch at both doors all night. Tom he went down the lightning-rod to spy around; and the nigger at the back door was asleep, and he stuck it in the back of his neck and come back. This letter said:

Don't betray me, I wish to be your friend. There is a desprate gang of cutthroats from over in the Ingean Territory³³ going to steal your runaway nigger to-night, and they have been trying to scare you so as you will stay in the house and not bother them. I am one of the gang, but have got religgion and wish to quit it and lead a honest life again, and will betray the helish design. They will sneak down from northards, along the fence, at midnight exact, with a false key, and go in the nigger's cabin to get him. I am to be off a piece and blow a tin horn if I see any danger; but stead of that, I will ^{BA} like a sheep soon as they get in and not blow at all; then whilst they are getting his chains loose, you slip there and lock them in, and can kill them at your leasure. Don't do anything hut just the way I am telling you, if you do they will suspicion something and raise whoop-jamboreehoo. I do not wish any reward but to know I have done the right thing.

Chapter 39

Die volgende oggend is ons dorp toe om 'n rotval van draad te koop; dié het ons teruggebring, die beste rotgat oopgemaak, en binne 'n uur vyftien uitgevrete lummels gevang. Ons het hulle op 'n veilige plek onder tant Sally se bed gaan wegsteek. Maar terwyl ons besig was om spinnekoppe te soek, het klein Thomas Franklin Benjamin Jefferson Elexander Phelps dit daar gekry en die deurtjie oopgemaak om te sien of die rotte sal uitkom, en hulle hét; en toe kom tant Sally in die kamer in, en toe ons terugkom, staan sy bo-op die bed en skree moord en brand terwyl die rotte hulle bes doen om haar nie te verveel nie. Sy kry ons net daar beet en stof ons met die verestoffer af, en toe kos dit ons twee voile ure om weer vyftien of sestien nuwes te vang, alles net oor daardie klein pestilensie, en die klomp was ook glad nie van die grootstes en mooistes nie want die eerstes was die uitsoekrotte. Ek het nog nooit 'n mooier spul rotte gesien as daardie eerste klomp nie.

Ons het 'n mooi versameling spinnekoppe en kewers en paddas en ruspes en sulke goed ook bymekaar gemaak; en ons wou nog graag 'n perdebynes ook hê, maar ons kon nie want die perdebye was almal binne-in. Ons het nie dadelik tou opgegooi nie, maar daar gebly so lank as wat ons kon; want ons het geskat dat een van twee dinge sou gebeur—of ons sou hulle moeg maak, of hulle vir ons; maar dis toe hulle wat gewen het. Toe't ons maar aluin aan die steekplekke gesmeer en dit het ons laat beter voel, maar ons kon nog nie baie gemaklik sit nie. En daarna het ons maar gaan slange soek. Ons het 'n paar dosyn kousbandslange en huisslange gevang en in 'n sak gestee en in ons kamer gebêre, en teen dié tyd was dit al aandetenstyd. Hét ons 'n eetlus gehad ná die dag se harde, eerlike werk! Maar toe ons terug- kom in die kamer, was daar nie 'n enkele slang oor nie, want ons het nie die sak behoorlik toegebind nie en hulle't toe op die een of ander manier uitgekruip en weggesail. Dit het nie veel saak gemaak nie, want ons het geskat hulle sou nog almal in die huis iewerster wees, en ons het gedink ons sal wel weer 'n klomp van hulle in die hande kry. Vir 'n hele lang ruk was daar g'n skaarste aan slange in daardie huis nie. Kort-kort sou daar een van 'n hanebalk of iets af val, gewoonlik op jou bord of in jou nek af, en die meeste van die tyd net waar jy hulle nié graag wou hê nie. Nou ja, dit was mooi goed, vol strepe, en 'n miljoen van hulle kon jou g'n skade aandoen nie, maar dit het aan tant Sally geen verskil gemaak nie: sy't slange gepes, maak nie saak van watter soort hulle was of hoe jy hulle vir haar aanbied nie; en elke slag as daar een op haar afval—maak nie saak wát sy besig was om te doen nie—dan't sy die werk net so gelos en agteroor geval, so uit soos 'n kers. Ek het rêrig nooit so 'n vroumens gesien nie. En jy kon haar tot in Jerigo hoor skree. Mens kon

haar nie so ver kry om een van die goed met 'n táng aan te raak nie. En as sy die slag omdraai en een in haar bed kry, dan sou sy daar uitfoeter en 'n gil gee wat jou laat dink die huis is aan die afbrand. Sy't die oubaas so ontstel dat hy later skoon gesê het hy wens daar was nooit g'n enkele slang geskape nie. Hemel, die laaste slang was al 'n week lank uit die huis uit, toe's tant Sally nog nie oor die ding nie—nog nie náby nie; en as sy dan so sit en dink oor iets en jy sluip stilletjies agter haar nader en raak met 'n veertjie aan haar nek, dan spring sy skoon uit haar kouse uit. Dit was rêrig 'n onverklaarbare besigheid. Maar Tom sê alle vroumense is so. Hy sê hulle's so gemaak, om die een of ander rede.

Elke slag wat een van ons slange haar die skrik op die lyf geja het, moes ons deurloop; en sy't gesweer dié afranselings is nog niks teen wat sou gebeur as ons ooit wéér die huis vol slange laai nie. Ek het nie juis omgee vir die ske nie, want dié was somer niks; maar ek hét omgee vir al die moeite wat dit ons gekos het om 'n nuwe spul te vang. Maar uiteindelik het ons hulle toe weer gehad, saam met al die ander gediertes; en niemand het nog ooit so 'n vrolike hut gesien as wat Jim s'n was wanneer hulle almal uitgekrioel kom om na sy musiek te luister nie. Jim het niks van die spinnekoppe gehou nie, en die spinnekoppe het niks van Jim gehou nie; dus het hulle hom altyd dopgelê en die wêreld vir horn warm gemaak. En hy't gesê dat daar met al die rotte en die slange en die meulsteen amper nie plek vir hóm op die bed was nie. En op die bietjie plek wat daar wás, kon mens glad nie slaap nie, so't dit daar gewoel. Dit was alewig aan die woel, het hy gesê, want *hulle* het nooit almal gelyk geslaap nie. Hulle't beurte geneem, sodat as die slange aan die slaap was, het die rotte uitgekruip, en as die rotte geslaap het, was die slange weer wakker. Daar was dus aljimmers een spul onder hom, ál in sy pad, en 'n ander spul aan 't sirkus hou bókant hom; en as hy die slag opstaan om 'n ander lêplek te gaan soek, dan betakel die spinnekoppe hom nes hy verbykom. Hy't gesweer dat as hy ooit dié slag daar uitkom, dan word hy nooit in sy lewe weer 'n gevangene nie, al betaal hulle hom daarvoor.

Nou ja, na so 'n drie weke was alles mooi agtermekaar. Die hemp het ons al vroegtydig in 'n pastei vir Jim gestuur, en elke slag wat 'n rot hom gebyt het, het hy opgestaan en 'n bietjie in sy dagboek geskrywe terwyl die ink nog vars is. Die penne was reg. Die inskripsies was op die meulsteen uitgekrap. Die katelpoot was middeldeer gesaag en die saagsels het ons opgeëet en die snaaksste maagpyl daarvan gekry. Ons het gereken ons sou doodgaan, maar op die ou end het ons toe nie. Ek het nog nooit sulke onverteerbare saagsels gesien nie; Tom ook nie. Maar soos ek al gesê het, die werk was nou eindelijk alles klaar en ons was taamlík pootuit, veral Jim. Die oubaas het al 'n hele paar keer aan die plantasie onderkant Orleans geskryf om hulle slaaf te kom haal, maar hy't g'n antwoord gekry nie omdat daar nooit so 'n plantasie wás nie. Dus het hy besluit om Jim maar in die koerante van New Orleans en St. Louis te adverteer. Toe hy van St. Louis se koerante praat, het dit my skoon die bewerasie gegee en ek het besef dat ons nie nou

meer tyd kon verspil nie. Toe sê Tom: nou's dit tyd vir die nonieme briewe.

„Wat se goed is dit?” vra ek.

„Waarskuwings aan die mense dat daar erens fout is. Partykeer word dit só gedoen, ander kere weer sús. Maar daar's altyd iemand wat mens afloer en dan die kasteel se goewemeur laat weet. Toe Lodewyk XVI uit die Tuilerieë uit wou vlug, het 'n kamermeisie dit gedoen. Dis 'n baie goeie manier—nes nonieme briewe. Ons kan altwee gebruik. En gewoonlik kom die gevangene se ma met hom klere omruil en dan bly sy in die kerker en hy glip uit in haar klere. Ons kan dit ook doen.”

„Maar hoekom wil ons die mense dan waarsku dat hier iets aan die gang is, Tom? Hulle kan dit mos self uitvind—dis hulle indaba.” „Ek weet, maar mens kan hulle nooit vertrou nie. Hulle't mos van die begin af so gemaak—ons moes eenvoudig *alles* doen. Hulle is so goedgeelowig en lief en onnosel dat hulle nooit enigiets sal raaksien nie. As ons hulle dus nie sêlf waarsku nie, dan sal daar niks en niemand wees om ons te kom hinder nie, en dan, ná al ons harde werk en ons moeilikhede, gaan die ontsnapping g'n pit in hom he nie; dit sal sommer nikswerd wees - alte vrek maklik.”

„Dis soos ék daarvan hou, Tom.”

„Hemel tog!” sê hy verontwaardig.

„Maar ek sal nie klae nie,” sê ek vinnig. „Ek sal enigiets doen wat jy besluit. Wat gaan ons doen omtrent daardie kamermeisie?”

„Jy kan die meisie wees. Jy kan in die middel van die nag suutjies insluip en daardie geel meidjie se rok vaslê.”

„Maar Tom, dit gaan die volgende more mos 'n groot moles ver- oorsaak, want ek skat sy hét net een rok.”

„Ek weet, maar jy't die ding tog net vir 'n kwartier nodig om die nonieme brief te vat en dit onder die voordeur te skuif.”

„Nou goed, dan sal ek dit doen. Maar ek kan dit tog net so maklik in my eie klere doen.”

„Jy sal nie juis danig veel soos 'n kamermeisie lyk nie, he?” „Daar sal tog niemand wees wat sal sien hoe ek lyk nie.”

„Dit het niks met die saak te doen nie. Ons moet eenvoudig ons *plig* doen en ons nie daaraan steur of ons gesien word of nie. Het jy dan g'n beginsels in jou nie?”

„Nou goed, ek sal my mond hou. Ek is dan die kamermeisie. En wie is Jim se ma?”

„Ek. Ek sal een van tant Sally se rokke vaslê.”

„Nou ja, maar dan sal jy mos in die hut moet agterbly as ek en Jim padgee.”

„Nooit. Ek sal Jim se klere vol strooi stop en dit op sy bed laat lê om sy ma in 'n vermomming voor te stel, dan kan Jim die negervrou se rok by my kry en dit aantrek, en dan neem ons almal saam die wyk. As 'n belangrike bandiet wegghol, noem mens dit altyd 'n uitwyking. Dis hoe mens sê as daar byvoorbeeld 'n koning wegghol. En 'n koning se seun ook; dit maak nie verskil

of hy 'n egte of 'n onegte seun is me.

Toe't Tom die nonieme brief geskryf en ek het dié nag die geel meidjie se rok geskaai en dit aangetrek, en die brief onder die voor- deur ingeskuiwe nes Tom my beduie het. Daarop het gestaan:

Oppas. Daar's moeilikheid aan die kom. Wees op julle hoede.

ONBEKENDE VRIEND

Die volgende aand het Tom 'n skedel en twee doodsbeendere in bloed geteken, en dié't ons aan die voordeur vasgesteek; en die nag daarná 'n prent van 'n doodkis aan die agterdeur. Ek het nog nooit 'n gesin só benoud gesien nie. Dit kon nie erger gewees het nie, selfs al was daardie hele ganse huis vol spoke wat mens agter meubels en onder beddens en goed voorlê en deur die lug rondbibber. Elke slag as daar 'n deur klap, het tant Sally gewip en geroep: „Oeps!” En elke slag as iets geval het, het sy gewip en gesê: „Oeps!” As jy skielik aan haar geraak het wanneer sy nie kyk nie, dan was dit dieselfde storie. Sy kon nêrens heen kyk en rustig voel nie, want sy't alewig bly dink daar's iets ágter haar—en daarom het sy kort-kort omgewip en gesê „Oeps!” en voor sy twee derdes in die rondte was, weer teruggewip en weer „Oeps!” gesê. En sy was te bang om te gaan slaap, maar sy kon dit ook nie waag om heelnag te bly regop sit nie. Die hele affêre het dus baie goed gewerk, het Tom gedink; hy't gesê hy't nog nooit iets so goed sien werk nie. En hy't gesê dit bewys dat die saak reg aangepak was.

En nou, so't hy besluit, nou vir die gróót gedoente. Net die volgende more, nog voor dagbreek, het ons dus nóg 'n brief gereed gemaak. Ons het bietjie gewonder wat ons daarmee sou maak, want aan etenstafel die vorige aand het ons gehoor dat daar die hele nag deur 'n slaaf by elke deur op wag sou wees. Tom het toe eers teen die weerligafleier afgeseil en die wêreld gaan verken; die neger by die agterdeur was vas aan die slaap, dus het hy die brief agter aan sy nek vasgesteek en teruggekom.

In dié brief het daar gestaan:

Moenie my verraai nie, ek wil graag julle vriend wees, 'n Roekelose bende moordenaars uit die Rooihuide se geweste gaan vannag julle wegloopslaaf kom steel, en hulle het julle probeer bang maak sodat julle in die huis moet bly en hulle nie kom pla nie. Ek is een van die bende, maar ek is 'n gelowige man en ek wil wegom en weer 'n eerbare lewe lei, daarom wil ek hulle duiwelse plan verklap. Hulle sal van die noordekant af teen die heining langs kom, net mooi middernag. Met 'n vals sleutel sal hulle die slaaf uit sy hut uit gaan haal. Ek moet 'n ent weg staan en op 'n blikbeuel blaas as ek gevaar sien, maar in plaas daarvan sal ek blêr soos 'n skaap nes hulle binnekant is en glad nie blaas nie. Terwyl hulle sy kettings lossny, kan julle hulle gaan toesluit en hulle dan op julle gemak doodmaak. Moet asseblief niks anders doen as wat ek vir julle sê nie, want dan sal hulle lont ruik en 'n moles maak. Ek vra geen beloning nie. Ek wil net weet dat ek die regie ding gedoen het.

ONBEKENDE VRIEND

SECTION 40

We was feeling pretty good, after breakfast, and took my canoe and went over the river a fishing, with a lunch, and had a good time, and took a look at the raft and found her all right, and got home late to supper, and found them in such a sweat and worry they didn't know which end they was standing on, and made us go right off to bed the minute we was done supper, and wouldn't tell us what the trouble was, and never let on a word about the new letter, but didn't need to, because we knowed as much about it as anybody did, and as soon as we was half up stairs and her back was turned, we slid for the cellar cupboard and loaded up a good lunch and took it up to our room and went to bed, and got up about half-past eleven, and Tom put on Aunt Sally's dress that he stole and was going to start with the lunch, but says:

"Where's the butter?"

"I laid out a hunk of it," I says, "on a piece of a cornpone."

"Well, you *left* it laid out, then—it ain't here."

"We can get along without it," I says.

"We can get along *with* it, too," he says; "just you slide down cellar and fetch it. And then mosey right down the lightning-rod and come along. I'll go and stuff the straw into Jim's clothes to represent his mother in disguise, and be ready to *ba* like a sheep and shove soon as you get there."

So out he went, and down cellar went I. The hunk of butter, big as a person's fist, was where I had left it, so I took up the slab of corn-pone with it on, and blowed out my light, and started up stairs, very stealthy, and got up to the main floor all right, but here comes Aunt Sally with a candle, and I clapped the truck in my hat, and clapped my hat on my head, and the next second she see me; and she says:

"You been down cellar?"

"Yes'm."

"What you been doing down there?"

"Noth'n!"

"*Noth'n!*"

"No'm."

"Well, then, what possessed you to go down there, this time of night?"

"I don't know'm."

"You don't *know*? Don't answer me that way, Tom, I want to know what you been *doing* down there?"

"I hain't been doing a single thing, Aunt Sally, I hope to gracious if I have."

I reckoned she'd let me go, now, and as a generl thing she would; but I spose there was so many strange things going on she was just in a sweat about every little thing that warn't yardstick straight; so she says, very decided:

“You just march into that setting-room and stay there till I come. You been up to something you no business to, and I lay I’ll find out what it is before *I’m* done with you.”

So she went away as I opened the door and walked into the setting-room. My, but there was a crowd there! Fifteen farmers, and every one of them had a gun. I was most powerful sick, and slunk to a chair and set down. They was setting around, some of them talking a little, in a low voice, and all of them fidgety and uneasy, but trying to look like they warn’t; but I knowed they was, because they was always taking off their hats, and putting them on, and scratching their heads, and changing their seats, and fumbling with their buttons. I warn’t easy myself, but I didn’t take my hat off, all the same.

I did wish Aunt Sally would come, and get done with me, and lick me, if she wanted to, and let me get away and tell Tom how we’d overdone this thing, and what a thundering hornet’s nest we’d got ourselves into, so we could stop fooling around, straight off, and clear out with Jim before these rips got out of patience and come for us.

At last she come, and begun to ask me questions, but I *couldn’t* answer them straight, I didn’t know which end of me was up; because these men was in such a fidget now, that some was wanting to start right *now* and lay for them desperadoes, and saying it warn’t but a few minutes to midnight; and others was trying to get them to hold on and wait for the sheep-signal; and here was aunty pegging away at the questions, and me a shaking all over and ready to sink down in my tracks I

was that scared; and the place getting hotter and hotter, and the butter beginning to melt and run down my neck and behind my ears; and pretty soon, when one of them says, "*I'm* for going and getting in the cabin *first*, and right *now*, and catching them when they come," I most dropped; and a streak of butter come a trickling down my forehead, and Aunt Sally she see it, and turns white as a sheet, and says:

"For the land's sake what is the matter with the child!—he's got the brain fever as shore as you're born, and they're oozing out!"

And everybody runs to see, and she snatches off my hat, and out comes the bread, and what was left of the butter, and she grabbed me, and hugged me, and says:

"Oh, what a turn you did give me! and how glad and grateful I am it ain't no worse; for luck's against us, and it never rains but it pours, and when I see that truck I thought we'd lost you, for I knowed by the color and all, it was just like your brains would be if—Dear, dear, whydn't you *tell* me that was what you'd been down there for, *I* wouldn't a cared. Now cler out to bed, and don't lemme see no more of you till morning!"

I was up stairs in a second, and down the lightning-rod in another one, and shinning through the dark for the lean-to. I couldn't hardly get my words out, I was so anxious; but I told Tom as quick as I could, we must jump for it, now, and not a minute to lose—the house full of men, yonder, with guns!

His eyes just blazed; and he says:

“No!—is that so? *Ain't* it bully! Why, Huck, if it was to do over again, I bet I could fetch two hundred! If we could put it off till——”

“Hurry! *hurry!*” I says. “Where’s Jim?”

“Right at your elbow; if you reach out your arm you can touch him. He’s dressed, and everything’s ready. Now we’ll slide out and give the sheep-signal.”

But then we heard the tramp of men, coming to the door, and heard them begin to fumble with the padlock; and heard a man say:

“I *told* you we’d be too soon; they haven’t come—the door is locked. Here, I’ll lock some of you into the cabin and you lay for ’em in the dark and kill ’em when they come; and the rest scatter around a piece, and listen if you can hear ’em coming.”

So in they come, but couldn’t see us in the dark, and most trod on us whilst we was hustling to get under the bed. But we got under all right, and out through the hole, swift but soft—Jim first, me next, and Tom last, which was according to Tom’s orders. Now we was in the lean-to, and heard trappings close by outside. So we crept to the door, and Tom stopped us there and put his eye to the crack, but couldn’t make out nothing, it was so dark; and whispered and said he would listen for the steps to get further, and when he nudged us Jim must glide out first, and him last. So he set his ear to the crack and listened, and listened, and listened, and the steps a scraping around, out there, all the time; and at last he nudged us, and we slid out, and stooped down, not breathing, and not making the least noise, and slipped stealthy towards the fence, in Injun

file, and got to it, all right, and me and Jim over it; but Tom's britches caught fust on a splinter on the top rail, and then he hear the steps coming, so he had to pull loose, which snapped the splinter and made a noise; and as he dropped in our tracks and started, somebody sings out:

"Who's that? Answer, or I'll shoot!"

But we didn't answer; we just unfurled our heels and shoved. Then there was a rush, and a *bang, bang, bang!* and the bullets fairly whizzed around us! We heard them sing out:

"Here they are! They've broke for the river! after 'em, boys! And turn loose the dogs!"

So here they come, full tilt. We could hear them, because they wore boots, and yelled, but we didn't wear no boots, and didn't yell. We was in the path to the mill; and when they got pretty close onto us, we dodged into the bush and let them go by, and then dropped in behind them. They'd had all the dogs shut up, so they wouldn't scare off the robbers; but by this time somebody had let them loose, and here they come, making pow-wow enough for a million; but they was our dogs; so we stopped in our tracks till they caughted up; and when they see it warn't nobody but us, and no excitement to offer them, they only just said howdy, and tore right ahead towards the shouting and clattering; and then we up steam again and whizzed along after them till we was nearly to the mill, and then struck up through the bush to where my canoe was tied, and hopped in and pulled for dear life towards the middle of the river, but didn't make no more noise than

we was obleeged to. Then we struck out, easy and comfortable, for the island where my raft was; and we could hear them yelling and barking at each other all up and down the bank, till we was so far away the sounds got dim and died out. And when we stepped onto the raft, I says:

“*Now*, old Jim, you’re a free man *again*, and I bet you won’t ever be a slave no more.”

“En a mighty good job it wuz, too, Huck. It ’uz planned beautiful, en it ’uz *done* beautiful; en dey ain’t *nobody* kin git up a plan dat’s mo’ mixed-up en splendid den what dat one wuz.”

We was all as glad as we could be, but Tom was the gladdest of all, because he had a bullet in the calf of his leg.ⁱ³³

When me and Jim heard that, we didn’t feel so brash as what we did before. It was hurting him considerble, and bleeding; so we laid him in the wigwam and tore up one of the duke’s shirts for to bandage him, but he says:

“Gimme the rags. I can do it myself. Don’t stop, now; don’t fool around here, and the evasion booming along so handsome; man the sweeps, and set her loose! Boys, we done it elegant!—‘deed we did. I wish *we’d* a had the handling of Louis XVI., there wouldn’t a been no ‘Son of Saint Louis, ascend to heaven!’³⁴ wrote down in *his* biography: no, sir, we’d a whooped him over the *border*—that’s what we’d a done with *him*—and done it just as slick as nothing at all, too. Man the sweeps—man the sweeps!”

But me and Jim was consulting—and thinking. And after we'd thought a minute, I says:

"Say it, Jim."

So he says:

"Well, den, dis is de way it look to me, Huck. Ef it wuz *him* dat 'uz bein' set free, en one er de boys wuz to git shot, would he say, 'Go on en save me, nemmine 'bout a doctor f'r to save dis one?' Is dat like Mars Tom Sawyer? Would he say dat? You *bet* he wouldn't! *Well*, den, is *Jim* gwyne to say it? No, sah—I doan' budge a step out'n dis place, 'dout a *doctor*; not if it's forty year!"

I knowed he was white inside, and I reckoned he'd say what he did say—so it was all right, now, and I told Tom I was agoing for a doctor. He raised considerble row about it, but me and Jim stuck to it and wouldn't budge; so he was for crawling out and setting the raft loose himself; but we wouldn't let him. Then he give us a piece of his mind—but it didn't do no good.

So when he see me getting the canoe ready, he says:

"Well, then, if you're bound to go, I'll tell you the way to do, when you get to the village. Shut the door, and blindfold the doctor tight and fast, and make him swear to be silent as the grave, and put a purse full of gold in his hand, and then take and lead him all around the back alleys and everywheres, in the dark, and then fetch him here in the canoe, in a round-about way amongst the islands, and search him and take his chalk away from him, and don't give it back to him till you get him back to the village, or else he will chalk

this raft so he can find it again. It's the way they all do."

So I said I would, and left, and Jim was to hide in the woods when he see the doctor coming, till he was gone again.

Chapter 40

Ons het nou hoogs in ons skik gevoel en na ete in my kano op die rivier gaan visvang, met 'n piekniekete by ons, en dit vreeslik geniet; ons het die vlot ook weer gaan uitsnuffel en gesien dat alles nog in orde is. En eers teen die aand het ons weer tuisgekom vir aandete. Die hele huis was in rep en roer van bekom- mernis, en net ná ete het hulle ons bed toe geja sonder om ons eers te sê waaroor al die bohaai gaan. Van die brief het hulle g'n dooie woord gesê nie, maar dit was ook nie nodig nie, want ons het daar net soveel van geweet as enigeen van hulle. Skaars was ons dan ook bo en tant Sally uit die pad uit, toe glip ons af kelder toe, lê daar 'n klomp kos vir middagete vas en dra dit op kamer toe, en gaan in- kruip. En halfelf staan ons weer op, en Tom trek die rok van tant Sally aan wat hy gesteel het, en ons wil net die kos bymekaar kry, toe vra hy:

„Waar's die hotter?"

„Ek het 'n stuk uitgehaal en dit op 'n stuk mieliebrood neergesit," sê ek.

„Dan't jy dit daar vergeet, want dis nie hier nie."

„O wel, ons kan daarsonder klaarkom," sê ek.

„Ons kan daarmée ook klaarkom," sê hy. „Weg is jy, gaan terug kelder toe en gaan haal dit. En dan seil jy met die weerligafleier af en kom agterna. Ek gaan solank Jim se klere vol strooi stop sodat dit sy ma in 'n vermomming kan voorstel. En nes jy daar kom, blêr jy soos 'n skaap en lê die rieme neer."

En daar trek hy. Ek wip af kelder toe en kry die stuk hotter—so groot soos 'n man se vuus—net waar ek dit vergeet het. Ek tel die stuk mieliebrood ook sommer op, blaas my kers uit en begin suutjies terugsluip. Ongestoord kom ek op die grondverdieping aan, maar net toe sien ek tant Sally met 'n kers aankom. Ek prop die goed blits- vinnig in my hoed, sit my hoed op my kop en staan haar en inwag.

Die volgende oomblik gewaar sy my, en vra dadelik: „Was jy in die kelder?"

„Ja, tante."

„Wat het jy daar gaan maak?"

„Niks."

„Niks!" „Nee, tante."

„Nou wat het jou dan besiel om dié tyd van die nag soontoe te gaan ?”

„Weet nie, tante.”

„Jy wéét nie? Moenie vir my staan en stories vertel nie, Tom. Ek wil weet wat jy daar gaan *maak* het.”

„Op aarde niks, tant Sally, so waar—ek sweer.”

Ek het gereken sy son my nou laat loop, en onder gewone omstandighede sóu sy ook, maar ek skat al die snaakse dinge wat daar al gebeur het, het haar die skrik op die lyf gejaag en het die kleinste ou dingetjie verdag voorgekom. Dus sê sy kwaai:

„Stap jy solank sitkamer toe en wag daar tot ek kom. Jy’t iets aan- gevang wat jy nie moes nie, en ek gaan uitvind wat dit was voordat ék met jou klaar is!”

En sy gee pad. Ek maak solank die sitkamerdeur oop. Hemel, en sit dié kamer toe vir jou vol mense! Vyftien boere, elkeen met ’n geweer. Ek het skoon naar gevoel en sommer in die eerste die beste stoel gaan neersak. Hulle het daar rond gesit, en ’n klompie het sag- gerig gesels, en almal het ongemaklik en rusteloos gelyk, maar hulle het die hele tyd probeer maak asof hulle dit nié is nie—maar ek het geweet hulle is, want hulle het aangehou met hoede afhaal en weer opsit, en kop krap, en van die een stoel na die ander loop, en torring aan hulle knope. Ek het self glad nie te gemaklik gevoel nie, maar ek het tog nie my hoed afgehaal nie.

Ek het gewens tant Sally wou nou gou terugkom en klaarspeel met my en my deurloop as sy lus het, sodat ek kan wegkom en vir Tom sê dat ons die saak te ver gevoer het en nou in ’n derduiwelse moles gaan beland, tensy ons vir Jim daar wegkry voor dié spul ongeduldig begin raak en op ons afstorm.

Uiteindelik kom sy toe darem en begin my peper met vrae, maar ek kón nou doodeenvoudig nie behoorlik antwoord nie, want van benoudheid het ek nie meer mooi geweet waar’s bo en waar onder nie, so het die klomp mans begin rondtrap. Party van hulle was lus om sommer daar en dan uit te storm en die skurke aan te val—dit was tog al klaar amper middernag. Maar die ander het hulle terugge- hou en gesê hulle moet wag tot die blêrsein gegee word. En tussen dit alles staan tant Sally my daar en piets met die vrae, terwyl ek staan en bibber en begin dink dat ek enige oomblik net daar van bangheid inmekaar gaan sak. En dit word al warmder en warmder daar binnekant en die hotter begin te smelt en al agter my ore langs in my nek af te drup. En toe sê een skielik: „Ek stel voor ons gaan sommer nou *dadelik* reguit na daardie hut toe en kruip daar weg en vang hulle nes hulle inkom.” En dit laat my so skrik dat ek amper in my spore inmeekaarsak, en ’n blerts hotter kom oor my voorkop afgedrup, en tant Sally gewaar dit en word so wit soos ’n laken en sê:

„Liewe hemel-ons, wat makeer die kind? Ek sweer hy’t brein- koors. Kyk hoe’s sy harsings besig om uit te syfer!”

En almal storm nader om my te beskou, en sy pluk my hoed af, en daar val die brood en die pappery van die hotter uit; en sy kry my beet en omhels my en sê:

„Jinne, maar jy’t my laat skrik! Ek is so bly dis niks ernstigs nie. Want die ongeluk ry ons nou so bloots en alles kom mos gelyk op ’n mens af, en toe ek dié straaltjie daar sien afloop, was ek séker ons gaan jou verloor. Ek het sommer aan die kleur kon sien—dis hoe jou harsings sal lyk as... My liewe, liewe kind tog, hoekom het jy my nie *gesê* dis wat jy daar onder gaan haal het nie ? Ek sou mos nie omgee het nie. Toe nou, bed toe met jou, en moenie dat ek jou weer voor móreoggend met ’n oog sien nie!”

Dit kos my net ’n minuut om bo te kom, en nog een om teen die weerligafleier af te seil, en toe laat ek ooplê deur die donker om by die buitekamertjie te kom. Ek was so benoud dat ek skaars kon praat, maar ek het vir Tom gesê ons moet onmiddellik maak dat ons daar uitkom sonder om ’n oomblik te versuim—want die huis sit dik van die mans met gewere!

Sy oë vlam net ’n slag, en hy sê: „Nooit! Rêrig? Dis darem nou vir jou wonderlik! Ek sê vir jou, Huck, as ons dit weer moet oordoen, dan kry ek swerlik tweehonderd van hulle bymekaar. As ons dit dalk kan uitstel totdat. .

„Maak gou! *Maak gou!*” antwoord ek. „Waar’s Jim?”

„Daar langs jou. As jy jou hand uitsteek, kan jy aan hom raak. Hy’s klaar aangetrek en alles is reg. Nou kan ons uitglip en die blêr- sein gee.”

Maar net toe hoor ons die mans se voetstappe buite, op pad deur toe, en hulle begin vroetel met die slot, en een van hulle sê:

„Ek het vir julle *gesê* ons is te vroeg. Hulle’t nog nie gekom nie— die deur is gesluit. Kyk, ek gaan ’n paar van julle hierbinne toesluit, dan kan julle hulle lê en inwag en platskiet as hulle opdaag. Die ander kan so ’n entjie weg begin uitsprei, dan kan ons hulle hoor aankom.” En daar kom hulle toe in die hut in, maar in die donker kan hulle ons nie sien nie, en hulle trap ons so amper nog raak ook terwyl ons onder die bed in skarrel. Maar gelukkig het ons daar ingekom, en toe deur die gat uit—blitsvinnig maar doodstil: eers Jim, toe ek en toe Tom heel agter, nes Tom dit beplan het. In die buitekamertjie het ons gestaan en luister na die voetstappe buitekant. Ons het deur toe gekruip en daar het Tom ons laat bly terwyl hy een oog teen ’n skrefie vasdruk, maar dit was te donker om iets te gewaar; hy sou luister tot die voetstappe weg is, fluister hy, en as hy aan ons raak, dan moet Jim heel eerste uitspaander; hý sal agterna kom. Hy druk sy oor teen die skreef vas en luister en luister en luister, en die hele tyd trap die voetstappe maar daar buitekant rond. Maar uiteindelik stamp hy aan ons en ons sluip buitentoe, laag gehurk, sonder om asem te haal, sonder om die minste geluidjie te maak, en suutjies glip ons een vir een heining toe; en ons bereik dit veilig en ek en Jim klouter bo-oor; maar Tom se broek haak aan ’n splinter aan die boonste reling vas en net toe hoor hy voetstappe naderkom en hy ruk los, en die splinter kraak; en net toe hy onder agter ons afspring en aanstalte maak om te begin ooplê, skree iemand :

„Haai, wie’s daar? Antwoord of ek skiet!”

Maar ons het nie geantwoord nie, net die rieme neergelê, die donker in. Agter ons hoor ons mense aanstorm en toe knal die skote so *boem! boem! boem!* en ons hoor behoorlik hoe fluit die koeëls rondom ons.

Ons hoor hulle skree: „Daar’s hulle! Hulle probeer rivier toe hol! Volg hulle, kêrels! Maak los die honde!”

En hier kom hulle volstoom agterna. Ons kon hulle goed hoor, want hulle’t stewels aangehad en aanmekaar geskree; maar óns het nie stewels aangehad nie en ook nie geskree nie. Ons het nou in die pad na die meul toe afgenael. En toe hulle baie naby begin kom, koes ons in die bosse in en laat hulle verbykom en val weer agter hulle in. Al die honde was toegesluit sodat hulle nie die rowers te vroeg moes skrikmaak nie; maar teen dié tyd het iemand hulle al weer losgelaat en ons kon hulle hoor aankom, met ’n kabaal asof daar ’n miljoen van hulle was. Maar dit was óns honde, dus het ons net doodstil bly staan totdat hulle by ons kom, en toe hulle sien dis maar net ons, het hulle net dag gesê en weer oopgelê agter die geskreeu en die lawaai aan. En daar trêk ons toe weer, ook agterna, tot ampertjies by die meul. Daar swenk ons tussen die bosse in na waar my kano vasge-meer lê. Ons spring in en roei dat dit bars—maar so geluidloos as moontlik—na die middel van die rivier toe. Daarvandaan kies ons op ons dooie gemak koers na die eiland waar die vlot lê, terwyl ons hulle nog al die tyd daar op en af op die wal langs hoor roep en blaf, totdat ons so ver weg is dat die geluide dof raak en verdwyn.

Toe ons eindelijk weer op die vlot klouter, sê ek: „Nou ja, Jim, nou’s jy weer ’n vry man. En ek glo nie jy wil sommer gou weer ’n slaaf wees nie!”

„Ennit het tog te mooi gebeur, Huck,” antwoord hy. „Tog te mooi sos julle dit ytgewerk het. G’n niemand kan ’n deurmeekaarder en ’n beterder plan maak as die ene nie.”

Ons was almal in die sewende hemel van geluk, maar Tom was die heel blyste want hy’t ’n koeël in die kuit gekry.

Toe ek en Jim dit te hore kom, was ons glad nie meer so opgewek nie. Hy’t heelwat pyn gehad en die wond het sleg gebloeï, dus het ons hom in die tent neergelê en een van die hertog se hemde stukkend geskeur om hom te verbind.

Maar hy sê: „Gee vir my die lappe, ek sal dit self doen. Moenie nou hier bly lê nie. Die uitwyking lok ons verder. Aan die werk, manne, laat ons uitvaar! Mensig, ons het dit darem bak gedoen! Ek wens *ons* kon vir ou Lodewyk XVI bietjie gehelp het, dan’t daar nie vandag in sy biografie gestaan: ‚Seun van die Heilige Lodewyk, opgevaar na die hemel’ nie! Nee, boeta, ons sou hom los-los oor die grens geneem het. Dís wat ons sou gedoen het, ja. En sommer so sito-sito ook. Aan die werk, matrose! Ons vaar uit!”

Maar ek en Jim was besig om raad te hou—en te dink. En nadat ons so ’n rukkie gedink het, sê ek: „Sê maar, Jim.”

Toe sê hy: „Kyk, dis hoelat dit vir my lyk, Huck. Assit nou hý was wat moes vrygemaak wóre en een vannie anner het geskiet geraak, dink jy hý sou geseg het: ‚Help vir my lat ek wegkom, los ’n dokter vir daai ou!’ Dis nie sos baas Tom Sawyer is nie. Sou hý so geseg het? Nog so nooit nie. Nou, dink jy ou Jim gaan so wees ? Aikona. Ek roer nie hier weg sonner ’n dokter nie, al sit ek nou veertig jarre hier.” Hy’t ’n wit hart gehad, dit het ek geweet, en ek

het verwág hy sou so praat. Dus was alles nou in orde, en ek het vir Tom vertel ek gaan 'n dokter soek. Hy't 'n groot bohaai gemaak, maar ek en Jim het net nie kopgegee nie. Naderhand wou hy op sy eentjie toe die vlot losmaak en begin afdryf, maar ons het hom gekeer. Toe't hy ons be- hoorlik ingeklim—maar dit het alles niks gehelp nie.

En toe hy nou sien ek begin die kano regmaak, sê hy: „Nou goed, as jy dan móét gaan, sal ek jou sê hoe jy in die dorp moet maak as jy daar kom. Maak die deur toe, blinddoek die dokter baie goed, laat hom eers sweer dat hy g'n woord sal verklap nie, druk 'n beurs vol goudstukke in sy hand, dan neem jy hom al met die agterstraatjies langs heen en weer in die donkerte, en daarna bring jy hom met die kano hiernatoe—maar met 'n ompad langs, al tussen die eilande deur, en soek hom eers goed deur en neem sy kryt van hom af en moenie dit teruggee voor julle weer in die dorp terug is nie, anders sal hy 'n merk hier aan die vlot maak sodat hy dit later kan herken. Dis hoe hulle almal maak.”

Ek het maar gesê ek sal dit doen, en vortgegaan; en ons het besluit dat Jim in die bosse sou wegkruip nes hy die dokter sien aankom; en daar sou hy bly totdat die dokter weer weg was.

SECTION 41

The doctor was an old man; a very nice, kind-looking old man, when I got him up. I told him me and my brother was over on Spanish Island hunting, yesterday afternoon, and camped on a piece of a raft we found, and about midnight he must a kicked his gun in his dreams, for it went off and shot him in the leg, and we wanted him to go over there and fix it and not say nothing about it, nor let anybody know, because we wanted to come home this evening, and surprise the folks.

“Who is your folks?” he says.

“The Phelpses, down yonder.”

“Oh,” he says. And after a minute, he says: “How’d you say he got shot?”

“He had a dream,” I says, “and it shot him.”

“Singular dream,” he says.

So he lit up his lantern, and got his saddle-bags, and we started. But when he see the canoe, he didn’t like the look of her—said she was big enough for one, but didn’t look pretty safe for two. I says:

“Oh, you needn’t be afeard, sir, she carried the three of us, easy enough.”

“What three?”

“Why, me and Sid, and—and—and *the guns*; that’s

what I mean.”

“Oh,” he says.

But he put his foot on the gunnel, and rocked her; and shook his head, and said he reckoned he'd look around for a bigger one. But they was all locked and chained; so he took my canoe, and said for me to wait till he come back, or I could hunt around further, or maybe I better go down home and get them ready for the surprise, if I wanted to. But I said I didn't; so I told him just how to find the raft, and then he started.

I struck an idea, pretty soon. I says to myself, spos'n he can't fix that leg just in three shakes of a sheep's tail, as the saying is? spos'n it takes him three or four days? What are we going to do?—lay around there till he lets the cat out of the bag? No, sir, I know what I'll do. I'll wait, and when he comes back, if he says he's got to go any more, I'll get down there, too, if I swim; and we'll take and tie him, and keep him, and shove out down the river; and when Tom's done with him, we'll give him what it's worth, or all we got, and then let him get shore.

So then I crept into a lumber pile to get some sleep; and next time I waked up the sun was away up over my head! I shot out and went for the doctor's house, but they told me he'd gone away in the night, some time or other, and warn't back yet. Well, thinks I, that looks powerful bad for Tom, and I'll dig out for the island, right off. So away I shoved, and turned the corner, and nearly rammed my head into Uncle Silas's stomach! He says:

“Why, *Tom!* Where you been, all this time, you rascal?”

“/ hain’t been nowheres,” I says, “only just hunting for the runaway nigger—me and Sid.”

“Why, where ever did you go?” he says. “Your aunt’s been mighty uneasy.”

“She needn’t,” I says, “because we was all right. We followed the men and the dogs, but they out-run us, and we lost them; but we thought we heard them on the water, so we got a canoe and took out after them, and crossed over but couldn’t find nothing of them; so we cruised along up-shore till we got kind of tired and beat out; and tied up the canoe and went to sleep, and never waked up till about an hour ago, then we paddled over here to hear the news, and Sid’s at the post-office to see what he can hear, and I’m a branching out to get something to eat for us, and then we’re going home.”

So then we went to the post-office to get “Sid”; but just as I suspicioned, he warn’t there; so the old man he got a letter out of the office, and we waited a while longer but Sid didn’t come; so the old man said come along, let Sid foot it home, or canoe-it, when he got done fooling around—but we would ride. I couldn’t get him to let me stay and wait for Sid; and he said there warn’t no use in it, and I must come along, and let Aunt Sally see we was all right.

When we got home, Aunt Sally was that glad to see me she laughed and cried both, and hugged me, and give me one of them lickings of hern that don’t amount to shucks, and said she’d serve Sid the same when he come.

And the place was plumb full of farmers and farmers’

wives, to dinner; and such another clack a body never heard. Old Mrs. Hotchkiss was the worst; her tongue was agoing all the time. She says:

“Well, Sister Phelps, I’ve ransacked that-air cabin over an’ I b’lieve the nigger was crazy. I says so to Sister Damrell—didn’t I, Sister Damrell?—s’l, he’s crazy, s’l—them’s the very words I said. You all hearn me: he’s crazy, s’l; everything shows it, s’l. Look at that-air grindstone, s’l; want to tell *me*’t any cretur ’ts in his right mind ’s agoin’ to scrabble all them crazy things onto a grindstone, s’l? Here sich ’n’ sich a person busted his heart; ’n’ here so ’n’ so pegged along for thirty-seven year, ’n’ all that—natcher! son o’ Louis somebody, ’n’ sich everlast’n rubbish. He’s plumb crazy, s’l; it’s what I says in the fust place, it’s what I says in the middle, ’n’ it’s what I says last ’n’ all the time—the nigger’s crazy—crazy’s Nebokoodneezer,³⁵ s’l.”

“An’ look at that-air ladder made out’n rags, Sister Hotchkiss,” says old Mrs. Damrell, “what in the name o’ goodness *could* he ever want of——”

“The very words I was a-sayin’ no longer ago th’n this minute to Sister Utterback, ’n’ she’ll tell you so herself. Sh-she, look at that-air rag ladder, sh-she; ’n’ s’l, yes, *look* at it, s’l—what *could* he a wanted of it, s’l. Sh-she, Sister Hotchkiss, sh-she——”

“But how in the nation’d they ever *git* that grindstone *in* there, anyway? ’n’ who dug that-air *hole*? ’n’ who——”

“My very *words*, Brer Penrod! I was a-sayin’—pass that-air sasser o’ m’lasses, won’t ye?—I was a-sayin’ to Sister Dunlap, jist this minute, how *did* they git that

grindstone in there, s'l. Without *help*, mind you—'thout *help*! *Thar's* wher' 'tis. Don't tell *me*, s'l; there *wuz* help, s'l; 'n' ther' wuz a *plenty* help, too, s'l; ther's ben a *dozen* a-helpin' that nigger, 'n' I lay I'd skin every last nigger on this place, but *I'd* find out who done it, s'l; 'n' moreover, s'l——”

“A *dozen* says you!—*forty* couldn't a done everything that's been done. Look at them case-knife saws and things, how tedious they've been made; look at that bed-leg sawed off with 'm, a week's work for six men; look at that nigger made out'n straw on the bed; and look at——”

“You may *well* say it, Brer Hightower! It's jist as I was a-sayin' to Brer Phelps, his own self. S'e, what do *you* think of it, Sister Hotchkiss, s'e? think o' what, Brer Phelps, s'l? think o' that bed-leg sawed off that a way, s'e? *think* of it, s'l? I lay it never sawed *itself* off, s'l—somebody *sawed* it, s'l; that's my opinion, take it or leave it, it mayn't be no 'count, s'l, but sich as 't is, it's my opinion, s'l, 'n' if anybody k'n start a better one, s'l, let him *do* it, s'l, that's all. I says to Sister Dunlap, s'l——”

“Why, dog my cats, they must a ben a house-full o' niggers in there every night for four weeks, to a done all that work, Sister Phelps. Look at that shirt—every last inch of it kivered over with secret African writ'n done with blood! Must a ben a raft uv 'm at it right along, all the time, amost. Why, I'd give two dollars to have it read to me; 'n' as for the niggers that wrote it, I 'low I'd take 'n' lash 'm t'll——”

“People to *help* him, Brother Marples! Well, I reckon

you'd *think* so, if you'd a been in this house for a while back. Why, they've stole everything they could lay their hands on—and we a watching, all the time, mind you. They stole that shirt right off o' the line! and as for that sheet they made the rag ladder out of ther' ain't no telling how many times they *didn't* steal that; and flour, and candles, and candlesticks, and spoons, and the old warming-pan, and most a thousand things that I disremember, now, and my new calico dress; and me, and Silas, and my Sid and Tom on the constant watch day *and* night, as I was a telling you, and not a one of us could catch hide nor hair, nor sight nor sound of them; and here at the last minute, lo and behold you, they slides right in under our noses, and fools us, and not only fools *us* but the Injun Territory robbers too, and actuly gets *away* with that nigger, safe and sound, and that with sixteen men and twenty-two dogs right on their very heels at that very time! I tell you, it just bangs anything I ever *heard* of. Why, *sperits* couldn't a done better, and been no smarter. And I reckon they must a *been* sperits—because, *you* know our dogs, and ther' ain't no better; well, them dogs never even got on the *track* of 'm, once! You explain *that* to me, if you can!—*any* of you!"

"Well, it does beat——"

"Laws alive, I never——"

"So help me, I wouldn't a be——"

"*House*-thieves as well as——"

"Goodnessgracioussakes, I'd a ben afeard to *live* in sich a——"

“Fraid to *live!*—why, I was that scared I dasn’t hardly go to bed, or get up, or lay down, or *set down*, Sister Ridgeway. Why, they’d steal the very—why, goodness sakes, you can guess what kind of a fluster *I* was in by the time midnight come, last night. I hope to gracious if I warn’t afraid they’d steal some o’ the family! I was just to that pass, I didn’t have no reasoning faculties no more. It looks foolish enough, *now*, in the daytime; but I says to myself, there’s my two poor boys asleep, ’way up stairs in that lonesome room, and I declare to goodness I was that uneasy ’t I crep’ up there and locked ’em in! I *did*. And anybody would. Because, you know, when you get scared, that way, and it keeps running on, and getting worse and worse, all the time, and your wits gets to addling, and you get to doing all sorts o’ wild things, and by-and-by you think to yourself, spos’n *I* was a boy, and was away up there, and the door ain’t locked, and you——” She stopped, looking kind of wondering, and then she turned her head around slow, and when her eye lit on me—I got up and took a walk.

Says I to myself, I can explain better how we come to not be in that room this morning, if I go out to one side and study over it a little. So I done it. But I dasn’t go fur, or she’d a sent for me. And when it was late in the day, the people all went, and then I come in and told her the noise and shooting waked up me and “Sid,” and the door was locked, and we wanted to see the fun, so we went down the lightning-rod, and both of us got hurt a little, and we didn’t never want to try *that* no more. And then I went on and told her all what I told Uncle Silas before; and then she said she’d forgive us, and maybe it was all right enough anyway, and about

what a body might expect of boys, for all boys was a pretty harum-scarum lot, as fur as she could see; and so, as long as no harm hadn't come of it, she judged she better put in her time being grateful we was alive and well and she had us still, stead of fretting over what was past and done. So then she kissed me, and patted me on the head, and dropped into a kind of a brown study; and pretty soon jumps up, and says:

"Why, lawsamercy, it's most night, and Sid not come yet! What *has* become of that boy?"

I see my chance; so I skips up and says:

"I'll run right up to town and get him," I says.

"No you won't," she says. "You'll stay right wher' you are; *one's* enough to be lost at a time. If he ain't here to supper, your uncle 'll go."

Well, he warn't there to supper; so right after supper uncle went.

He come back about ten, a little bit uneasy; hadn't run across Tom's track. Aunt Sally was a good *deal* uneasy; but Uncle Silas he said there warn't no occasion to be—boys will be boys, he said, and you'll see this one turn up in the morning, all sound and right. So she had to be satisfied. But she said she'd set up for him a while, anyway, and keep a light burning, so he could see it.

And then when I went up to bed she come up with me and fetched her candle, and tucked me in, and mothered me so good I felt mean, and like I couldn't look her in the face; and she set down on the bed and

talked with me a long time, and said what a splendid boy Sid was, and didn't seem to want to ever stop talking about him; and kept asking me every now and then, if I reckoned he could a got lost, or hurt, or maybe drowned, and might be laying at this minute, somewheres, suffering or dead, and she not by him to help him, and so the tears would drip down, silent, and I would tell her that Sid was all right, and would be home in the morning, sure; and she would squeeze my hand, or maybe kiss me, and tell me to say it again, and keep on saying it, because it done her good, and she was in so much trouble. And when she was going away, she looked down in my eyes, so steady and gentle, and says:

"The door ain't going to be locked, Tom; and there's the window and the rod; but you'll be good, *won't* you? And you won't go? For *my* sake."

Laws knows I *wanted* to go, bad enough, to see about Tom, and was all intending to go; but after that, I wouldn't a went, not for kingdoms.

But she was on my mind, and Tom was on my mind; so I slept very restless. And twice I went down the rod, away in the night, and slipped around front, and see her setting there by her candle in the window with her eyes towards the road and the tears in them; and I wished I could do something for her, but I couldn't, only to swear that I wouldn't never do nothing to grieve her any more. And the third time, I waked up at dawn, and slid down, and she was there yet, and her candle was most out, and her old gray head was resting on her hand, and she was asleep.

Chapter 41

Die dokter was 'n ou man; 'n baie lieue, vriendelike ou man, toe ek hom eindelijk opklop. Ek het hom vertel dat ek en my broer die vorige middag op Spaanseiland gaan jag het en daar op 'n stuk ou vlot gaan uitkamp het; en so teen middernag moes hy sy geweer in sy slaap raakgeskop het terwyl hy aan die droom was, want die ding het afgegaan en hy't die skoot in sy been gekry. En nou wou ons asseblief hê hy moet soontoe gaan en dit regmaak en vir niemand daarvan sê nie, en niemand iets laat agterkom nie, want ons wil graag vanaand huis toe gaan en ons mense verras.

„Wie's julle mense?” vra hy.

„Die Phelpse daar oorkant.”

„O,” sê hy. En na 'n rukkie sê hy: „Hoe't jy gesê het hy die skoot gekry?”

„Hy't 'n droom gehad, en toe skiet dit hom.”

„Uitsonderlike droom,” sê hy.

Toe steek hy sy lantern aan en maak sy saalsakke bymekaar en daar gaan ons. Maar toe hy eers die kano sien, het die dingetjie hom glad nie aangestaan nie. Hy't gese oit mag groot genoeg wees vir één maar sekerlik nie alte veilig vir twee nie.”

„Dokter hoef glad nie bang te wees nie,” sê ek. „Die kanotjie het die drie van ons maklik gedra.”

„Watter drie?”

„Ek en Sid, natuurlik, en . . . en . . . die *gewere*. Dis wat ek bedoel.”

„O,” sê hy.

Maar hy trap eers met sy voet op die rand en laat die ding 'n bietjie wieg, en toe skud hy sy kop en sê nee, hy sal liewers 'n groter een gaan soek. Maar al die ander was vasgeketting en gesluit, dus moes hy maar my kano neem. Ek moet agterbly, sê hy, en wag tot hy weer terugkom, tensy ek lus voel om verder te soek, of om huis toe te gaan en die mense te begin voorberei vir die verrassing as ek so voel. Maar ek het hom gesê ek voel nié so nie. En toe't ek hom maar beduie waar om die vlot te kry, en hy's weg.

Sommer gou-gou kry ek 'n plan. Sê nou hy kry nie daardie been in 'n japtrap reg nie, dink ek: sê nou dit duur drie of vier dae? Wat gaan ons dán maak? Hier wag tot tyd en wyl hy die aap uit die mou laat? Nooit! Nee, ek weet wat ek gaan doen. Ek gaan hier wag, en as hy terugkom en hy sê hy moet wéér later teruggaan, dan gaan ek sorg dat ek óók daar kom, al moet ek nou swem. Dan kan ons hom vas- bind en met hom stroom-af dryf, en wanneer Tom hom nie meer nodig het nie, kan ons hom betaal wat dit werd is, of seifs alles wat ons het, en hom weer aan wal sit.

Toe kruip ek onder 'n houthoop in om bietjie te slaap; en toe ek wakker skrik, staan die son al doer bokant my kop! Ek pyl dadelik na die dokter se

huis toe, maar daar sê hulle vir my hy's die nag iewers heen uitgeroep en hy's nog nie terug nie. Dan lyk dit maar sleg vir ou Tom, dink ek en ek besluit om dadelik eiland toe te laat vat. En ek spring ook sommer weg, om die hoek, en loop byna oom Silas se wind met my kop uit!

„Tom!” sê hy. „Waar was jy al die tyd, jou karnallie?”

„Ek was nêrens nie, oom,” sê ek. „Net gesoek na die wegloop- slaaf. Ek en Sid.”

„Maar waar op aarde het julle rondgedwaal? Jou tante is ver- skriklik onrustig.”

„Dit was tog onnodig,” antwoord ek. „Want daar was mos niks met ons verkeerd nie. Ons het agter die mans en die honde aange- hard loop, maar hulle't onder ons uitgeloopt; daarna het ons ons verbeel ons hoor hulle op die rivier, en toe't ons 'n kano gesoek en uitgeroei—tot by die oorkantste wal, maar puur verniet. Ons het toe maar so al teen die wal langs gehou tot ons moeg was, en toe die kano vasgemaak en gaan slaap en eers 'n uur gelede weer wakker geword. Toe't ons hiernatoe geroei om te hoor wat aangaan. Sid is in die poskantoor om iets te probeer uitvind, en ek is sommer op soek na iets om te eet. Daarna staan ons koppe huis toe.”

Ons gaan dus reguit poskantoor toe om vir „Sid” te gaan haal, maar nes ek verwag het, was hy nie daar nie. Die oubaas het toe maar sy pos gekry en ons het nog 'n ruk gewag, maar daar was g'n teken van „Sid” nie.

Toe sê die oubaas: „Kom, Sid kan maar huis toe stap, of met die kano afry, as hy eendag klaar is. Ons kan ry.” Ek kon hom nie oor- reed om my daar te laat wag nie: hy't gesê dis onnodig, en ek moet saamkom sodat tant Sally kan sien daar's niks verkeerd nie.

By die huis aangekom, was tant Sally so bly om my weer te sien, dat sy gehuil en gelag het tegelyk; en sy't my in 'n omhelsing beetge- kry en een van daardie loesinkies van haar gegee wat so nikswerd is, en belowe om vir Sid net so deur te loop as hy terugkom.

Die hele wêreld was vol van boere en boervrouens wat vir ete oorgekom het; en so 'n gekekkel hoor mens nie aldag nie. Ou miesies Hotchkiss was die ergste van almal; haar tong het g'n oomblik gerus nie.

„Wel, sus Phelps,” het sy gesê. „Ek het daardie hele hut omgekeer en ek sweer jou voor die slaaf was mal. Ek sê vir sus Damrell—het ek nou nie, sus Damrell?—sê ek: hy's mal, sê ek—dis die einste woorde wat ek gesê het. Julie hoor almal: hy's mal, sê ek, mens kan dit aan álles sien, sê ek. Kyk net na daardie meulsteen, sê ek. Wil julle vir my kom vertel enigiemand met al sy varkies gaan so 'n spul mallig- hede op 'n meulsteen uitkrap, vra ek? Hier't so-en-so se hart gebreek. Hier't so-en-so sewe-en-dertig jaar lank uitgeteer, ensovoorts—die onegte seun van Lodewyk iemand, en sulke twak. Hy's stawelgek, sê ek. Dis wat ek heel aan die begin al gesê het, dis wat ek in die middel sê, en dis wat ek heel laaste nóg sal sê—daardie slaaf is mal, so mal soos Nebukadneser, sê ek.”

„En wat van daardie leer van lappe en goed, sus Hotchkiss?” vra ou

miesies Damrell. „Wat op dese liewe aardbodem *kon* hy nou ooit. . .”

„Dis die einste-symste woorde wat ek nou so-ewe nog vir suster Utterback ook gesê het, vra haar. Sy sê: Kyk na daardie leer van lappe en goed, sê sy. En ek sê: Ja, *kyk* net, sê ek: wat sou hy met so ’n ding kon aanvang, sê ek. En sy sê, suster Hotchkiss, sy sê . .

„Maar hoe de duiwel het hulle ooit daardie meulsteen daar inge- kry ? En wie’t daardie *gat* gegrawe ? En wie ...”

„Daar sê jy nou my eie woorde, broer Penrod! Ek sê ve-effent— gee dan bietjie daardie swartstroop aan, asseblief!—ek sê ve-effent vir sus Dunlap—sommer nou-nou-nou nog, sê ek: hoe *het* hulle daardie meulsteen daar ingekry, sê ek. En dit sonder *hulp*, hoor, sonder *hulp*. Dáár lê die ding. Moenie vir my sê nie, sê ek, dat daar g’n hulp was nie, sê ek. Daar was sommer *baie* helpers, sê ek. Daar was minstens ’n *dosyn* wat daardie neger gehelp het, en ek is altevol lus en slag die leste een van hulle af tot ek uitvind wie dit gedoen het, sê ek. En buitendien, sê ek . . .”

„’n *Dosyn*, sê jy! *Veertig* mense kon nie al daardie werk gedoen het nie. Kyk na daardie knipmes-sae en goed, hoe sorgvuldig hulle ge- maak is. Kyk na daardie katelpoot wat hulle daarmee afgesaag het— dis ’n werk wat ses man ’n week lank sal besig hou; kyk na daardie strooipop op die bed; kyk na . . .”

„Jy kan dit weer sê, broer Hightower! Dis nes ek vir broer Phelps gesê het, einste vir hom. Hy vra: wat dink jy daarvan, sus Hotchkiss, vra hy? Waarvan, broer Phelps, vra ek? Dink net aan die katelpoot wat so afgesaag is, sê hy. *Dink* daaraan, sê ek? Ek sweer vir jou die ding het hom nie sêlf so afgesaag nie, sê ek. Iemand het dit afgesaag, sê ek. Dis nou wat ék dink, of julle dit wil aanvaar of te nie. Dit mag niks werd wees nie, sê ek, maar dis nou wat ék dink, sê ek, en as enigiemand iets beters kan bedink, sê ek, dan moet hy maar, sê ek. Ek sê vir suster Dunlap, sê ek . . .”

„Vadertjie-ons, daar moes ’n hele huis vol slawe hier gewees het, suster Phelps, elke liewe nag, vier weke lank ten minste, om al dié werk gedoen te kry. Wat van daardie hemp? Elke duim daarvan is bedek met geheime Midde-Afrikaanse skrif wat in bloed daar ge- skrywe is! Ek skat ’n hele vlot van hulle moes een stryk deur daaraan gewerk het. Ek sal twee dollars betaal as iemand dit vir my kan lees. En ek sweer, as ek die negers vang wat dit gedoen het, sal ek vir hulle slaat dat . . .”

„*Helpers*, broer Marples? Jy sou éérs so gedink het as jy so ’n rukkie gelede hier in hierdie huis was. Ek sê vir jou, hulle’t alles gesteel wat hulle in die hande kon kry—en dit terwyl ons die hele tyd oop-oë hier was. Hulle’t daardie hemp van die wasgoedlyn af gesteel! En daardie laken waarvan hulle die leer gemaak het: ek kan julle nie sê hoeveel keer hulle dié ding gesteel het nie. En meel, en kerse, en blakers, en lepels, en die ou pan, en seker ’n duisend ander goed waarvan ek nie nou kan onthou nie, en my nuwe sisrok; en dit terwyl ek en Silas en Sid en Tom dwarsdeur, dag *en* nag, waggehou het soos ek al gesê het—en nie een van ons kon ’n haar of ’n lid of ’n geluidjie

van hulle gewaar nie. En op die nippertjie, hier kom glip hulle reg onder ons neuse in en hulle flous nie net vir óns nie, maar vir al daardie Rooihuid-rowers ook—en hulle kry dit reg om weg te kom met die neger, en dit met sestien of twee-en-twintig honde op hulle hakke! Nee kyk, ek sê vir julle, van sówat het ek nog nooit gehoor nie. G'n spook sou dit beter of vinniger kon gedoen het nie. Ek het ál 'n gedagte dat dit dalk spoke *was*, want julle kén tog ons honde — die beste wat jy kan kry: en hulle't nie eers 'n *spoor* gekry nie! Verduidelik nou vir my dit, as julle kan—enigeeen van julle!”

„Hemeltjie tog, ek het nooit . . .”

„So waar as wragtie, ek sou nie graag . . .”

„*Inbrekers* en dan nog . . .”

„Goeievadertjiehemeltog, ek sou bang gewees het om in so 'n huis te wóón . . .”

„Bang om te *woon*? Hemel, ek was so bang, ek het dit nie gewaag om te gaan slaap, of om op te staan, of te lê, of te gaan sit nie, sus Ridgeway. Hulle sou enigiets steel, seifs die . . . en kan julle julle voorstel hoe deur die wind ek teen middernag gisteraand was? Ek was sowaar bang hulle dra van my mense weg. Ek was toe al só, ek kon nie meer reg dink nie. Ek weet dit lyk nou verspot, hier helder- oordag, maar ek dog by myself: daar lê daardie twee arme seuns en slaap, doer ver bo in daardie verlate kamer; en ek sê vir julle, ek was só bekommerd dat ek daar opgeklim en hulle deur gaan toesluit het. Sowaar, ja. *Enigiemand* sou dit gedoen het. Want julle weet mos as mens só begin bang word en dit raak ál erger en erger en jou kop werk naderhand nie meer mooi nie en jy begin jou allerhande wilde dinge verbeel, dan dink jy mos later: Sê nou maar *ek* was 'n seun en ek het alleen daar bo gelê en slaap, en die deur was nie gesluit nie, en jy . . .” Sy steek vas, half nadenkend, en sy draai haar kop stadig tot haar oë na my kyk. Toe gee ek pad.

Want ek dag by myself: ek sal baie beter kan verduidelik hoe dit gekom het dat ons nié vanmóre in daardie kamer was nie, as ek kaps kry om dit eenkant 'n bietjie te gaan oordink. Dis dié dat ek toe so gemaak het. Maar ek kon dit nie baie ver waag nie, anders sou sy my weer laat haal het. En later in die dag, ná al die mense weer weg was, het ek vir haar vertel hoe die lawaai en die geskree vir my en „Sid” wakker gemaak het, en toe was die deur gesluit en ons wou deel in die pret dus het ons teen die weerligafleier afgeseil. Ons het altwee effens seergekry en besluit dat ons dit nie weer sou probeer nie. En verder het ek haar alles vertel wat ek reeds aan oom Silas vertel het, en sy't gesê sy vergewe ons, want dalk is alles tóg maar in orde so: mens kan nou maar eenmaal sulke dinge van seuns verwag, hulle is so 'n wilde spul; en solank ons in g'n moeilikheid beland het nie, moes sy seker maar dankbaar wees dat ons lewendig en gesond was en dat sy ons nog altyd by haar gehad het, ná al die kommer en sorge. Toe't sy my gesoen en my kop gestreel en half ingedagte geraak. Maar skielik spring sy op en sê:

„Maar my jinning, dis amper donker en Sid is nog nie terug nie. Wat kón van die kind geword het?”

Dadelik gewaar ek 'n kans, en ek sê vinnig: „Ek kan gou dorp toe gaan en horn gaan haal.”

„O nee,” antwoord sy. „Jy bly net waar jy is. Dis genoeg dat daar een op 'n slag weg is. As hy teen aandete nog nie hier is nie, kan jou oom hom gaan soek.”

Nou ja, teen aandete was hy nog nie terug nie; dus is oom Silas net daarna vort.

Teen tienuur was hy weer terug, taamlik bekommerd; hy't Tom nêrens gewaar nie. Tant Sally was sommer *behoorlik* onrustig, maar oom Silas het vir haar gesê daar's g'n nodigheid voor nie: seuns is nou maar eenmaal seuns, en móreoggend sal Sid weer springlewen- dig en gesond terug wees. Sy moes dus maar net tevrede wees. Maar sy't gesê sy sal tog 'n ruk wakker bly om vir hom te wag en 'n lig laat brand sodat hy dit kan sien.

En toe ék gaan slaap, het sy saam met my gekom, met haar kers by haar, en my goed toegemaak en so vertroetel dat ek skoon gemeen begin voel het en haar net nie in die gesig kon kyk nie; en toe kom sit sy op die bed en gesels 'n hele lang ruk daar met my, en sê watter liewe seun Sid is, tot dit lyk asof sy nooit weer gaan end kry nie. En elke kort-kort vra sy my of ek dink hy't dalk verdwaal, of seergekry, of dalk verdrink, sodat hy nou êrens dood of vol pyn lê en sy's nie eers by hom nie. En dan begin haar trane saggies te drup en ek hou maar aan om te sê daar's niks met Sid verkeerd nie, hy sal sekerlik móreoggend terugkom. En dan druk sy my hand, of soen my, en laat my dit weer oor sê, weer en weer, omdat dit haar so goed doen en sy so vol bekkemmisse is. Toe sy eindelijk aanstalt te maak om te gaan, kyk sy my so sag en stip in die oë, en sy sê:

„Die deur sal nie gesluit wees nie, Tom. En die venster en die pyp is ook nog altyd daarbuite. Maar jy sal mos soet wees vannag, nê, en nie uitgaan nie ? Net om *my* onthalwe.”

Die hemel weet, ek *wou* bitter graag uitgaan om Tom in die hande te kry; en dit was ook my vaste voorneme om te gaan. Maar daarná sou ek dit net nie kon doen nie, nie vir al die koninkryke op aarde nie.

Maar sy't in my kop bly maal, en Tom het in my kop bly maal, dus het ek maar sleg geslaap. Twee keer het ek teen die weerligafleier afgeseil en in die donkerte ingeglip, en dan't ek haar daar met haar kers by die venster sien sit, met haar oë stip op die pad, en trane in hulle; en ek het gewens ek kon iets vir haar doen, maar ek kón nie— behalwe om te sweer dat ek nooit weer iets sou doen wat haar sou hartseer maak nie. Die derde keer was dit al dagbreek toe ek weer daar afseil, en sy was nog altyd daar, en die kers was al amper dood, en haar ou grys kop was op haar hand gestut, en sy was aan die slaap.

SECTION 42

The old man was up town again, before breakfast, but couldn't get no track of Tom; and both of them set at the table, thinking, and not saying nothing, and looking mournful, and their coffee getting cold, and not eating anything. And by-and-by the old man says:

"Did I give you the letter?"

"What letter?"

"The one I got yesterday out of the post-office."

"No, you didn't give me no letter."

"Well, I must a forgot it."

So he rummaged his pockets, and then went off somewheres where he had laid it down, and fetched it, and give it to her. She says:

"Why, it's from St. Petersburg—it's from Sis."

I allowed another walk would do me good; but I couldn't stir. But before she could break it open, she dropped it and run—for she see something. And so did I. It was Tom Sawyer on a mattress; and that old doctor; and Jim, in *her* calico dress, with his hands tied behind him; and a lot of people. I hid the letter behind the first thing that come handy, and rushed. She flung herself at Tom, crying, and says:

"Oh, he's dead, he's dead, I know he's dead!"

And Tom he turned his head a little, and muttered something or other, which showed he warn't in his right mind; then she flung up her hands, and says:

"He's alive, thank God! And that's enough!" and she snatched a kiss of him, and flew for the house to get the bed ready, and scattering orders right and left at the niggers and everybody else, as fast as her tongue could go, every jump of the way.

I followed the men to see what they was going to do with Jim; and the old doctor and Uncle Silas followed after Tom into the house. The men was very huffy, and some of them wanted to hang Jim, for an example to all the other niggers around there, so they wouldn't be trying to run away, like Jim done, and making such a raft of trouble, and keeping a whole family scared most to death for days and nights. But the others said, don't do it, it wouldn't answer at all, he ain't our nigger, and his owner would turn up and make us pay for him, sure. So that cooled them down a little, because the people that's always the most anxious for to hang a nigger that hain't done just right, is always the very ones that ain't the most anxious to pay for him when they've got their satisfaction out of him.

They cussed Jim considerable, though, and give him a cuff or two, side the head, once in a while, but Jim never said nothing, and he never let on to know me, and they took him to the same cabin, and put his own clothes on him, and chained him again, and not to no bed-leg, this time, but to a big staple drove into the bottom log, and chained his hands, too, and both legs, and said he warn't to have nothing but bread and water to eat, after this, till his owner come or he was

sold at auction, because he didn't come in a certain length of time, and filled up our hole, and said a couple of farmers with guns must stand watch around about the cabin every night, and a bull-dog tied to the door in the day-time; and about this time they was through with the job and was tapering off with a kind of generl goodbye cussing, and then the old doctor comes and takes a look, and says:

"Don't be no rougher on him than you're obleeged to, because he ain't a bad nigger. When I got to where I found the boy, I see I couldn't cut the bullet out without some help, and he warn't in no condition for me to leave, to go and get help; and he got a little worse and a little worse, and after a long time he went out of his head, and wouldn't let me come anigh him, any more, and said if I chalked his raft he'd kill me, and no end of wild foolishness like that, and I see I couldn't do anything at all with him; so I says, I got to have *help*, somehow; and the minute I says it, out crawls this nigger from somewheres, and says he'll help, and he done it, too, and done it very well. Of course I judged he must be a runaway nigger, and there I *was!* and there I had to stick, right straight along all the rest of the day, and all night. It was a fix, I tell you! I had a couple of patients with the chills, and of course I'd of liked to run up to town and see them, but I dasn't, because the nigger might get away, and then I'd be to blame; and yet never a skiff come close enough for me to hail. So there I had to stick, plumb till daylight this morning; and I never see a nigger that was a better nuss or faithfuller, and yet he was resking his freedom to do it, and was all tired out, too, and I see plain enough he'd been worked main hard, lately. I liked the

nigger for that; I tell you, gentlemen, a nigger like that is worth a thousand dollars—and kind treatment, too. I had everything I needed, and the boy was doing as well there as he would a done at home—better, maybe, because it was so quiet; but there I *was*, with both of 'm on my hands; and there I had to stick, till about dawn this morning; then some men in a skiff come by, and as good luck would have it, the nigger was setting by the pallet with his head propped on his knees, sound asleep; so I motioned them in, quiet, and they slipped up on him and grabbed him and tied him before he knowed what he was about, and we never had no trouble. And the boy being in a kind of a flighty sleep, too, we muffled the oars and hitched the raft on, and towed her over very nice and quiet, and the nigger never made the least row nor said a word, from the start. He ain't no bad nigger, gentlemen; that's what I think about him."

Somebody says:

"Well, it sounds very good, doctor, I'm obleeged to say." Then the others softened up a little, too, and I was mighty thankful to that old doctor for doing Jim that good turn; and I was glad it was according to my judgment of him, too; because I thought he had a good heart in him and was a good man, the first time I see him. Then they all agreed that Jim had acted very well, and was deserving to have some notice took of it, and reward. So every one of them promised, right out and hearty, that they wouldn't cuss him no more.

Then they come out and locked him up. I hoped they was going to say he could have one or two of the chains took off, because they was rotten heavy, or

could have meat and greens with his bread and water, but they didn't think of it, and I reckoned it warn't best for me to mix in, but I judged I'd get the doctor's yarn to Aunt Sally, somehow or other, as soon as I'd got through the breakers that was laying just ahead of me. Explanations, I mean, of how I forgot to mention about Sid being shot, when I was telling how him and me put in that dratted night paddling around hunting the runaway nigger.

But I had plenty time. Aunt Sally she stuck to the sickroom all day and all night; and every time I see Uncle Silas mooning around, I dodged him.

Next morning I heard Tom was a good deal better, and they said Aunt Sally was gone to get a nap. So I slips to the sickroom, and if I found him awake I reckoned we could put up a yarn for the family that would wash. But he was sleeping, and sleeping very peaceful, too; and pale, not fire-faced the way he was when he come. So I set down and laid for him to wake. In about a half an hour, Aunt Sally comes gliding in, and there I was, up a stump again! She motioned me to be still, and set down by me, and begun to whisper, and said we could all be joyful now, because all the symptoms was first rate, and he'd been sleeping like that for ever so long, and looking better and peacefuller all the time, and ten to one he'd wake up in his right mind.

So we set there watching, and by-and-by he stirs a bit, and opened ³⁶ his eyes very natural, and takes a look, and says:

"Hello, why I'm at *home*! How's that? Where's the raft?"

"It's all right," I says.

"And *Jim*?"

"The same," I says, but couldn't say it pretty brash. But he never noticed, but says:

"Good! Splendid! *Now* we're all right and safe! Did you tell Aunty?"

I was going to say yes; but she chipped in and says:

"About what, Sid?"

"Why, about the way the whole thing was done."

"What whole thing?"

"Why, *the* whole thing. There ain't but one; how we set the runaway nigger free—me and Tom."

"Good land! Set the run—What *is* the child talking about! Dear, dear, out of his head again!"

"*No*, I ain't out of my HEAD; I know all what I'm talking about. We *did* set him free—me and Tom. We laid out to do it, and we *done* it. And we done it elegant, too." He'd got a start, and she never checked him up, just set and stared and stared, and let him clip along, and I see it warn't no use for *me* to put in. "Why, Aunty, it cost us a power of work—weeks of it—hours and hours, every night, whilst you was all asleep. And we had to steal candles, and the sheet, and the shirt, and your dress, and spoons, and tin plates, and case-knives, and the warming-pan, and the grindstone, and flour, and just no end of things, and you can't think what work it was to make the saws, and pens, and

inscriptions, and one thing or another, and you can't think *half* the fun it was. And we had to make up the pictures of coffins and things, and nonnamous letters from the robbers, and get up and down the lightning-rod, and dig the hole into the cabin, and make the rope-ladder and send it in cooked up in a pie, and send in spoons and things to work with, in your apron pocket"—

"Mercy sakes!"

—"and load up the cabin with rats and snakes and so on, for company for Jim; and then you kept Tom here so long with the butter in his hat that you come near spiling the whole business, because the men come before we was out of the cabin, and we had to rush, and they heard us and let drive at us, and I got my share, and we dodged out of the path and let them go by, and when the dogs come they warn't interested in us, but went for the most noise, and we got our canoe, and made for the raft, and was all safe, and Jim was a free man, and we done it all by ourselves, and *wasn't* it bully, Aunty!"

"Well, I never heard the likes of it in all my born days! So it was *you*, you little rapscaillions, that's been making all this trouble, and turned everybody's wits clean inside out and scared us all most to death. I've as good a notion as ever I had in my life, to take it out o' you this very minute. To think, here I've been, night after night, a—*you* just get well once, you young scamp, and I lay I'll tan the Old Harry^{e1} out o' both o' ye!"

But Tom, he *was* so proud and joyful, he just *couldn't*

hold in, and his tongue just *went* it—she a-chipping in, and spitting fire all along, and both of them going it at once, like a cat-convention; and she says:

“*Well*, you get all the enjoyment you can out of it *now*, for mind I tell you if I catch you meddling with him again——”

“Meddling with *who*?” Tom says, dropping his smile and looking surprised.

“With *who*? Why, the runaway nigger, of course. Who’d you reckon?”

Tom looks at me very grave, and says:

“Tom, didn’t you just tell me he was all right? Hasn’t he got away?”

“*Him*?” says Aunt Sally; “the runaway nigger? ’Deed he hasn’t. They’ve got him back, safe and sound, and he’s in that cabin again, on bread and water, and loaded down with chains, till he’s claimed or sold!”

Tom rose square up in bed, with his eye hot, and his nostrils opening and shutting like gills, and sings out to me:

“They hain’t no *right* to shut him up! *Shove!*—and don’t you lose a minute. Turn him loose! he ain’t no slave; he’s as free as any cretur that walks this earth!”

“What *does* the child mean?”

“I mean every word I *say*, Aunt Sally, and if somebody don’t go, *I*’ll go. I’ve knowed him all his life, and so has Tom, there. Old Miss Watson died^{e2} two months ago,

and she was ashamed she ever was going to sell him down the river, and *said* so; and she set him free in her will.”

“Then what on earth did *you* want to set him free for, seeing he was already free?”

“Well, that *is* a question, I must say; and *just* like women! Why, I wanted the *adventure* of it; and I’d a waded neck-deep in blood to—goodness alive, AUNT POLLY!”

If she warn’t standing right there, just inside the door, looking as sweet and contented as an angel half-full of pie, I wish I may never!

Aunt Sally jumped for her, and most hugged the head off of her, and cried over her, and I found a good enough place for me under the bed, for it was getting pretty sultry for *us*, seemed to me. And I peeped out, and in a little while Tom’s Aunt Polly shook herself loose and stood there looking across at Tom over her spectacles—kind of grinding him into the earth, you know. And then she says:

“Yes, you *better* turn y’r head away—I would if I was you, Tom.”

“Oh, deary me!” says Aunt Sally, “*is* he changed so? Why, that ain’t *Tom* it’s Sid; Tom’s—Tom’s—why, where is Tom? He was here a minute ago.”

“You mean where’s Huck *Finn*—that’s what you mean! I reckon I hain’t raised such a scamp as my Tom all these years^{e3}, not to know him when I see him. That *would* be a pretty howdy-do. Come out from under that

bed, Huck Finn.”

So I done it. But not feeling brash.

Aunt Sally she was one of the mixed-upset looking persons I ever see; except one, and that was Uncle Silas, when he come in, and they told it all to him. It kind of made him drunk, as you may say, and he didn't know nothing at all the rest of the day, and preached a prayer-meeting sermon that night that give him a rattling reputation, because the oldest man in the world couldn't a understood it. So Tom's Aunt Polly, she told all about who I was, and what; and I had to up and tell how I was in such a tight place that when Mrs. Phelps took me for Tom Sawyer—she chipped in and says, “Oh, go on and call me Aunt Sally, I'm used to it, now, and 'tain't no need to change”—that when Aunt Sally took me for Tom Sawyer, I had to stand it—there warn't no other way, and I knowed he wouldn't mind, because it would be nuts for him, being a mystery, and he'd make an adventure out of it and be perfectly satisfied. And so it turned out, and he let on to be Sid, and made things as soft as he could for me.

And his Aunt Polly she said Tom was right about old Miss Watson setting Jim free in her will; and so, sure enough, Tom Sawyer had gone and took all that trouble and bother to set a free nigger free! and I couldn't ever understand, before, until that minute and that talk, how he *could* help a body set a nigger free, with his bringing-up.

Well, Aunt Polly she said that when Aunt Sally wrote to her that Tom and *Sid* had come, all right and safe, she says to herself:

“Look at that, now! I might have expected it, letting him go off that way without anybody to watch him. So now I got to go and trapse all the way down the river, eleven hundred mile^{e4}, and find out what that creetur’s up to, *this* time; as long as I couldn’t seem to get any answer out of you about it.”

“Why, I never heard nothing from you,” says Aunt Sally.

“Well, I wonder! Why, I wrote to you twice, to ask you what you could mean by Sid being here.”

“Well, I never got ’em, Sis.”

Aunt Polly, she turns around slow and severe, and says:

“You, Tom!”

“Well—*what?*” he says, kind of pettish.

“Don’t you what *me*, you impudent thing—hand out them letters.”

“What letters?”

“*Them* letters. I be bound, if I have to take aholt of you I’ll——”

“They’re in the trunk. There, now. And they’re just the same as they was when I got them out of the office. I hain’t looked into them, I hain’t touched them. But I knowed they’d make trouble, and I thought if you warn’t in no hurry, I’d——”

“Well, you *do* need skinning, there ain’t no mistake

about it. And I wrote another one to tell you I was coming; and I spose he——”

“No, it come yesterday; I hain’t read it yet, but *it’s* all right, I’ve got that one.”

I wanted to offer to bet two dollars she hadn’t, but I reckoned maybe it was just as safe to not to. So I never said nothing.

Chapter 42

Voor ontbyt is die oubaas al weer in dorp toe, maar hy kon g’n taal of tyding van Tom raakloop nie; en hulle’t altwee diep ingedagte daar by die tafel gesit en niks gesê nie, net baie treurig gelyk terwyl hulle koffie koud word, en niks geëet nie. Eindelik vra die oubaas: „Het ek jou al die brief gegee?”

„Wat se brief?”

„Die een wat ek gister by die poskantoor gekry het.”

„Nee, jy’t my g’n brief gegee nie.”

„Dan moes ek skoon daarvan vergeet het.” Hy begin sy sakke deursoek, loop dan uit om dit iewers te gaan haal waar hy dit neerge- sit het, en kom daarmee terug, en gee dit vir haar.

„My wêreld, dis van St. Petersburg,” sê sy. „Van Sus.”

Ek het gereken ’n wandelinkie sou my nogal goed doen, juis tóé, maar ek kon nie roer nie. Voor sy dit egter kon oopmaak, laat sy dit val en storm daar uit—sy’t iets gesien. Ek ook. Dit was Tom Sawyer op ’n matras, en die ou dokter by hom, en Jim in háár sisrok uitgevat, met sy hande agter sy rug vasgebind, en ’n norring mense. Ek het die brief agter die eerste die beste ding weggesteek, en uitgestorm.

Sy’t nader gehardloop en huil-huil uitgeroep: „O, hy’s dood, hy’s dood, ek weet hy’s dood!”

Toe draai Tom sy kop so effentjies en mompel iets, sodat mens kon hoor hy’s nie by sy positiewe nie. En dadelik gooi sy haar arms in die lug op en roep:

„Hy lewe, dank die hemel! Dis genoeg!” En sy soen hom, en hardloop terug huis toe om die bed op te maak, en deel links en regs bevele onder die slawe en ander mense uit, net so vinnig as wat haar tong kan roer.

. Ek is agter die mans aan om te sien wat hulle met Jim gaan aan- vang, en die ou dokter en oom Silas is saam met Tom die huis in. Die mans was baie

omgekrap en 'n paar van hulle wou Jim somer ophang as 'n waarskuwing aan alle slawe in die kontrei om nie ook te probeer weghol soos wat Jim gemaak het nie—want kyk nou net wat se spul sonde en ergernis het hy veroorsaak en dae en nagte aan- mekaar die hele gesin in doodsangs laat lewe. Maar van die ander mans het gesê nee moenie, dit sal nooit deug nie, want dis nie ons slaaf nie en een van die dae daag die eienaar op en eis skadevergoeding. Dit het hulle 'n bietjie laat afkoel, want die mense wat altyd die gretigste is om 'n neger op te hang as hy net effentjies skeeftrap, is altyd die wat glad nie die gretigste is om te betaal nadat hulle met hom afgereken het nie.

Maar hulle't Jim sleg uitgeskel en hom elke kort-kort 'n paar klappe teen die kop gegee; maar hy't g'n woord gesê nie en glad nie gewys dat hy my ken nie, en toe't hulle hom na dieselfde hut toe teruggeneem en sy eie klere vir hom aangetrek en hom weer vasgeketting—dié slag nie aan die katel nie, maar aan 'n swaar ysterstaaf in die onderste balk van die hut. Hulle het sy hande ook vasgeketting, en altwee sy bene, en gesê hy sal voortaan net brood en water te ete kry, tot tyd en wyl sy eienaar opdaag, of totdat hy op 'n vendusie verkoop word as sy eienaar nie binne 'n bepaalde tyd kom nie. Daama het hulle ons gat toegegooi en besluit dat 'n paar boere met gewere voortaan elke nag by die hut sal wagstaan en dat 'n bulhond bedags aan die deur vasgemaak sal word. Teen dié tyd was hulle omtrent klaar met die werk en hulle was net besig met 'n laaste sarsie uitskellery toe die ou dokter kom kyk hoe dit gaan.

„Moenie kwaaiër met hom werk as wat nodig is nie,” sê hy. „Want hy's nie 'n sleg slaaf nie. Toe ek daar by die seun aangeland het, het ek gou gesien ek sal nooit die koeël uitgesny kry sonder hulp nie, en ek kon hom ook nie alleen daar laat bly om eers te gaan hulp soek nie. Hy't begin sieker word, en al sieker, en later aan 't yl geraak en hy wou my nie naby hom laat kom nie, en hy't aangehou sê hy sal my doodmaak as ek krytmerke op sy vlot maak en al sulke twak. Ek kon net niks met hom uitrig nie. En toe sê ek hardop vir myself ek móét net iemand kry om te help—en net toe ek dit sê, hier kom die slaaf uitgekruip en hy sê hý sal help. En hy hét ook, en goed daarby. Ek het natuurlik dadelik gedink dis 'n wegloopslaaf. En daar *sit* ek toe, en ek moet maar net eenvoudig daar blý ook, dwarsdeur die dag, en die volgende nag. Dit was 'n penarie, glo my! Ek het 'n hele paar pasiënte met verkoue gehad en ek wou alte graag dorp toe gaan om hulle te gaan opsoek, maar ek kon dit nie waag nie—want dalk hol die slaaf dan weg en dan's dit my skuld. En nie een enkele keer het daar 'n skuit naby genoeg gekom dat ek hom kon nader roep nie. Daar sit ek toe tot vanmore ligdag. En ek het nog nooit 'n getrouer slaaf gesien of 'n beter verpleger nie—en tog het hy sy eie vryheid daarmee gewaag; en hy was uitgeput boonop. Ek kon sien hy't 'n moeilike tydjie agter die rug. Ek het somer van hom gehou. Ek sê vir julle, menere, só 'n slaaf is maklik 'n duisend dollars werd— met goeie behandeling daarby. Ek het alles byderhand gehad wat ek nodig gehad het, en die seun was so gemaklik as wat hy by die huis sou gewees het—ek dink dit was seifs vir hom beter daar, want

dit was so rustig; maar nou ja, daar *sit* ek toe, met altwee van hulle; en ek bly daar sit tot vanmore dagbreek. Toe't daar 'n paar kêrels in 'n skuit verbygekom, en gelukkig het die slaaf juis toe net vas aan die slaap by die matras gesit, met sy kop op sy knieë. Dus het ek hulle suutjies nader gewink en voor hy geweet het waar hy was, het hulle hom oorrumpel en vasgebind, sonder die minste moeite. Die seun was ook ylend en aan die slaap. Dus het ons die spane maar saggies laat werk en die vlot aan die skuit vasgebind en hom heerlik doodstil wal toe gesleep. En die hele tyd het die slaaf nie die minste moles gemaak of 'n dooie woord gesê nie. Hy's nie 'n slegte neger nie, menere. Dis wat ék van hom dink."

„Ek moet sê, dokter, dit klínk regtig goed,” sê een van hulle.

Dit het die ander ook 'n bietjie laat bedaar en ek was alte dankbaar dat die ou dokter Jim dié guns bewys het; en ek was óók bly dat dit presies was soos wat ék vir Jim geskat het, want ek het nog altyd gedink hy't 'n goeie hart en hy's 'n goeie mens, vandat ek hom die heel eerste keer gesien het. Hulle het almal saamgestem dat Jim baie goed gehandel het en dat mens dit darem in ag moes neem en beloon. En daar en dan het hulle almal belowe dat hulle hom nie meer sal uitskel nie.

Daarna het hulle uitgekom en die hut toegesluit. Ek het gehoop hulle sou een of twee van die kettings losmaak, want die goed was verduiwels swaar, of hom toelaat om darem bietjie vleis en groente by sy brood en water te kry, maar hulle het nie daaraan gedink nie en ek het geskat ek moet maar liewers my neus daaruit hou; maar ek het my voorgeneem om vir tant Sally nog te gaan vertel wat die dokter gesê het, nes ek deur die kwaai branders was wat daar vir my voorgelê het. Ek bedoel nou al die verduidelikings oor hoekom ek vergeet het om te sê dat Sid raakgeskiet is toe ek hulle vertel het van hoe ons daardie nag na die wegloper gesoek het.

Maar ek het oorgenoeg tyd gehad. Tant Sally het die ganse dag en nag in die siekekamer gebly; en elke slag as ek oom Silas gewaar, het ek maar net gesorg dat ek uit sy pad uit bly.

Die volgende oggend het ek gehoor dat Tom heelwat beter was, en hulle het gesê tant Sally het 'n rukkie gaan slaap. Dus is ek dadelik na die siekekamer toe, want ek dog as hy dalk wakker lê, kan ons saam 'n storie prakseer om die gesin mee om die bos te lei. Maar hy was aan die slaap toe ek daar kom, tog te rustig aan die slaap, en bleek ook, glad nie so rooi in die gesig soos wat hy was toe hy daar opge- daag het nie. Toe gaan sit ek maar en wag dat hy moet wakker word, 'n Halfuur later kom tant Sally skielik in die kamer in, en daar sit ek toe vasgekeer! Maar sy beduie vir my om stil te bly en sy kom sit by my en begin te fluister oor hoe ons nou maar weer almal opgewek en bly kan wees, want al die simptome was nou reg, en hy't nog nooit só lank aanmekaar geslaap nie; en hy lyk glo nou elke slag beter; wie weet, as hy daar wakker word, is hy dalk by sy positiewe.

Ons sit dus saam-saam daar en waghou, en na 'n ruk begin hy effens roer en hy maak sy oë heeltemal natuurlik oop en kyk 'n bietjie rond, en sê dan:

„Maar ek is dan by die huis! Hoe't dit gebeur ? Waar is die vlot ?”

„Die vlot is doodreg,” antwoord ek.

„En *Jim*?”

„Ook so,” sê ek, maar nie alte manhaftig nie. Maar hy kom dit nie eers agter nie, en sê net:

„Mooi! Pragtig! Dan's alles mos so reg soos 'n roer. Het jy al vir tant Sally vertel?”

Ek wou net sê ja, toe val sy ons in die rede en vra: „Waarvan, Sid?”

„Oor hoe die hele ding gedoen is, natuurlik.”

„Wat se hele ding?”

„Die hele ding. Daar't mos net een ding gebeur. Van hoe ons die wegloopslaaf laat wegkom het—ek en Tom.”

„My goeiste, die wegloop . . . Waarvan praat die kind tog? Foei, foei, hy's al weer deurmekaar.”

„Nee, ek is g'n deurmekaar nie! Ek weet goed waarvan ek praat. Ons *het* hom laat wegkom, ek en Tom. Ons het al die planne daar- voor beraam, en toe't ons dit gedoen ook. En somer piekfyn ook.” Nou was hy goed op stryk, en sy't hom ook glad nie probeer keer nie, net daar gesit en hom aangegaap terwyl hy een stryk deur vertel—en ek kon sien dit gaan niks help dat ék tussenbeide probeer kom nie. „Gits, tant Sally,” sê hy, „ons het ons amper doodgewerk, weke aan- mekaar, ure en ure elke nag terwyl julle aan die slaap was. En ons moes kerse steel, en die laken, en die hemp, en tante se rok, en lepels, en blikborde, en knipmesse, en die pan, en die meulsteen, en meel, en 'n hele klomp ander goed. Tante het g'n idee van hoeveel werk dit gekos het om die sae en die penne en die inskripsies en goed te maak nie, en ek is seker tante het ook g'n idee van *hoe ons* dit geniet het nie. En toe moes ons nog die prente van doodkiste en goed ook teken, en nonieme briewe van die rowers af skryf, en op- en afseil teen die weerligafleier, en die gat na die hut toe grawe, en die touleer maak en dit in 'n pastei vir Jim bak, en vir hom al die lepels en goed stuur om mee te werk—somer in tante se voorskootsak . . .”

„Hemel!”

„. . . en die hut vol rotte en slange en goed maak sodat Jim 'n bietjie geselskap kon hê; en toe hou hulle Tom so lank hier met die hotter onder sy hoed dat dit amper die hele saak verongeluk het, want die mans het in die hut ingekom nog voor ons daar uit was en toe moes ons oorhaastig werk; dit het gemaak dat hulle ons gehoor het, en toe sit hulle ons agterna, en ek kry die skoot in die been, en ons kruip in die bosse weg tot hulle verby is; en die honde het hulle glad nie eers aan ons gesteur nie, maar al agter die geraas aan gehardloop, en toe't ons in ons kano gespring en vlot toe geroei, en ons was veilig, en Jim was vry—en ons het dit alles vingeralleen gedoen en dit was *wonderlik*, tant Sally!”

„Ek het in my dag des lewens nog nooit sowat gehoor nie! Dan was dit al die tyd julle wat al die sonde veroorsaak het en ons almal op hoi geja het en

ons amper dood gehad het van skrik, julle kar- nallies! Ek het sowaar lus en loop jou sommer net hier deur. Om te dink, hier't ek nag vir nag . . . o, jou klein derduiwel, laat jy net weer gesond word, dan gaan ek darem vir julle twee deurloop dat julle nie weet wáár julle is nie."

Maar wat, Tom was so trots en in sy skik dat hy net nie kon ophou nie; sy tong het een stryk deur bly wikkell, terwyl sy hom kort-kort in die rede val en amper vuur spoeg, altwee gelyk aan die praat, soos 'n katekonsert.

En eindelijk sê sy: „Nou goed, dié slag het julle dit dan geniet. Maar laat ek julle net één keer weer met hom sien lol . .

„Lol met wie?" vra Tom. Sy glimlag verdwyn en hy lyk verbaas.

„Met wie? Met die wegloopslaaf, natuurlik. Hoe't jy miskien gedink?"

Verstom en ernstig draai Tom sy oë na my kant toe en vra: „Maar Huck, het jy dan nie vir my gesê dit gaan goed met hom nie? Is hy dan nie weg nie?"

„Hy?" vra tant Sally. „Die wegloopslaaf? Natuurlik is hy nie weg nie. Hulle't hom gevang en teruggebring en nou sit hy weer daar in sy hut, dié slag net met brood en water, en vol kettings, en daar gaan hy blý tot iemand hom kom opeis of tot hy verkoop word."

Tom gaan penorent in die bed sit. Sy oë vlam en sy neusgate rek wyd oop en trek dan weer toe, nes kiewe, en hy skree na my kant toe: „Maar hulle't g'n reg om hom op te sluit nie! *Weg is jy!* En moenie 'n oomblik versuim nie. Maak hom los. Hy's g'n slaaf nie: hy's net so vry soos enigiemand anders op aarde."

„Wat kan die kind tog nou weer bedoel?"

„Ek bedoel elke woord wat ek sê, tant Sally. En as iemand anders nie gaan nie, dan gaan *ek*. Ek ken hom my hele lewe lank, en Tom ook. Ou juffrou Watson is twee maande gelede dood en sy't so skaam gevoel dat sy ooit van plan was om hom in die suide te gaan verkoop, dat sy dit reguit erken het, en in haar testament het sy hom vryge- stel."

„Maar hoekom wou jy hom dan nog kom help ontsnap as hy klaar vry was?"

„Dis nou vir jou 'n vraag. Dis nes vroumense is. Ek het dit vir die avontuur gedoen, natuurlik. En ek sou tot by my nek in die bloed ge- loop het om . . . My liewe hemel, *TANT POLLY!*"

En so waar as wragtie: daar staan sy op die drumpel, so liefies en tevrede soos 'n engel met 'n maag vol pastei!

Tant Sally bestorm haar en omhels amper haar kop van haar lyf af, en bars in trane uit, en intussen sien ek daar's heeltemal genoeg plek vir my onder die bed, want die wêreld het nou taamlik onderstebo begin lyk vir ons twee, skat ek. Ek het uitgeloeer daar van onder af, en na 'n rukkie kon ek sien dat Tom se tant Polly haar loswikkell en vir Tom oor haar bril staan en begluur—amper asof sy hom in die grond in wil boor.

En toe sê sy: „Jy *beter* jou kop wegdraai, ja—dis wat ék sou doen as ek jy was, Tom!"

„My jinning tog," sê tant Sally. „Het hy dan só verander? Dis nie *Tom* dié

nie, dis Sid. Tom is ... Tom is .. . waar is Tom? Hy was dan nou net hier gewees?”

„Jy bedoel waar is Huck Finn—dis wat jy bedoel! Dink jy ek sal ’n klein derduiweel soos Tom nie ken ná ek al hierdie jare gesukkel het om hom groot te maak nie? Dit sal vir jou ’n mooi affere wees. Kruip *uit* daar onder die bed uit, Huck Finn!”

Ek gehoorsaam. Maar ek voel glad nie juis op my stukke nie.

Ek het min mense nog ooit só deur die wind sien lyk as tant Sally; net één het erger gelyk, en dit was oom Silas, toe hy daar inkom en hulle hom die hele storie vertel. Mens kan amper sê dit het hom dronkerig gemaak en vir die res van die dag was hy skoon die kluts kwyd, en daardie aand het hy ’n preek afgesteek wat hom ’n onver- geetlike reputasie besorg het, want nie eers die oudste mens op aarde sou dit kon verstaan nie. Nou ja, Tom se tant Polly het toe alles uit- geblaker oor wie *ék* was, en wat ek was; en toe moes ek maar mooitjies verduidelik in watter penarie ek verkeer het toe mevrou Phelps my vir Tom Sawyer aangesien het. Daar’t sy my in die rede geval en gesê: „Ag, sê tog maar tant Sally. Ek is nou daaraan ge- woond en dis onnodig om dit nou te wil verander.” Soos ek gesê het, ek verduidelik toe dat ek maar net moes saamspeel toe tant Sally my vir Tom Sawyer aangesien het. Daar was g’n ander uitweg nie, en ek het tog geweet hý sou nie omgee nie; hy sou dit eintlik *geniet*, omdat dit ’n geheim was waaruit hy ’n avontuur kon prakseer. En dis dan ook net wat gebeur het, en hy’t gemaak of hy Sid is om die lewe vir my maklik te maak.

En tant Polly het gesê dis heeltemal reg wat Tom van ou juffrou Watson vertel het—dat sy Jim in haar testament sy vryheid gegee het; dus het Tom Sawyer so waar as wragtie al daardie moeite gedoen om ’n vry neger vry te maak! En dit nadat ek nooit kon verstaan hoe iemand wat soos hy grootgemaak was, iemand anders ooit kon help om ’n slaaf te laat ontsnap nie!

Nou ja, tant Polly vertel toe dat sy van tant Sally ’n brief gekry het wat sê dat Tom *en* Sid veilig daar aangekom het, toe’t sy by haarself gedink: „Kyk nou weer daar! Ek kon ook *verwag* het dit sou gebeur as ek horn so alleen laat gaan sonder iemand om ’n ogie oor hom te hou. Nou moet ek maar dié hele elfhonderd myl ver met die rivier af reis en gaan kyk wat hy weer besig is om aan te vang—terwyl jy my dan niks wou laat weet nie.”

„Maar hoe kon ek?” vra tant Sally. „Ek het dan niks van jónu gehoor nie!”

„Wat? Maar ek het jou dan twee briewe geskryf om te vra wat jy daarby bedoel dat Sid ook hier is.”

„Ek het nooit daardie briewe gekry nie, Sus.”

Stadig en kwaai draai tant Polly haar kop: „Tom!” sê sy.

„Hê? Wat?” vra hy half druipstert.

„Moenie vir my vra wat nie, jou klein astrant. Gee daardie briewe.”

„Watter briewe?”

„Daardie briewe. Ek sweer as ek jou nou bydam, dan . . .”

„Hulle’s daar in my koffer. En hulle is nog nes hulle was toe ek hulle by

die poskantoor gekry het. Ek het hulle nie gelees nie, ek het nie aan hulle geráák nie. Maar ek het geweet hulle sou moeilikheid maak, en toe't ek gedink tante is tog seker nie haastig nie . . .”

„Jóú velle moet 'n slag afgetrek word. En toe't ek nog een geskryf om te sê ek kom, maar ek veronderstel hy . . .”

„Nee, dié het gister gekom. Ek het dit nog nie gelees nie, maar die een het ek.”

Ek sou graag twee dollars wou wed dat sy hom nié het nie, maar ek het gereken dis dalk maar veiliger om dit nie te doen nie. Toe't ek maar niks gesê nie.

CHAPTER THE LAST

The first time I caught Tom, private, I asked him what was his idea, time of the evasion?—what it was he'd planned to do if the evasion worked all right and he managed to set a nigger free that was already free before? And he said, what he had planned in his head, from the start, if we got Jim out all safe, was for us to run him down the river, on the raft, and have adventures plumb to the mouth of the river, and then tell him about his being free, and take him back up home on a steamboat, in style, and pay him for his lost time, and write word ahead and get out all the niggers around, and have them waltz him into town with a torch-light procession and a brass band, and then he would be a hero, and so would we. But I reckened it was about as well the way it was.

We had Jim out of the chains in no timeⁱ³⁴, and when Aunt Polly and Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally found out how good he helped the doctor nurse Tom, they made a heap of fuss over him, and fixed him up prime, and give him all he wanted to eat, and a good time, and nothing to do. And we had him up to the sick-room, and had a high talk; and Tom give Jim forty dollars^{e1} for being prisoner for us so patient, and doing it up so good, and Jim was pleased most to death, and busted out, and says:

“*Dah*, now, Huck, what I tell you?—what I tell you up dah on Jackson islan’? I *tole* you I got a hairy breas’, en what’s de sign un it; en I *tole* you I ben rich wunst, en gwineter to be rich *agin*; en it’s come true; en heah

she *is!* *Dah*, now! doan' talk to *me*—signs is *signs*, mine I tell you; en I knowed jis' 's well 'at I 'uz gwineter be rich agin as I's a stannin' heah dis minute!"

And then Tom he talked along, and talked along, and says, le's all three slide out of here, one of these nights, and get an outfit, and go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns^{e2}, over in the Territory, for a couple of weeks or two; and I says, all right, that suits me, but I aint got no money for to buy the outfit, and I reckon I couldn't get none from home, because it's likely pap's been back before now, and got it all away from Judge Thatcher and drunk it up.

"No he hain't," Tom says; "it's all there, yet—six thousand dollars and more^{e3}; and your pap hain't ever been back since. Hadn't when I come away, anyhow."

Jim says, kind of solemn:

"He ain't a comin' back no mo', Huck."

I says:

"Why, Jim?"

"Nemmine why, Huck—but he ain't comin' back no mo'."

But I kept at him; so at last he says:

"Doan' you 'member de house dat was float'n down de river, en dey wuz a man in dah, kivered up, en I went in en unkivered him and didn' let you come in? Well, den, you k'n git yo' money when you wants it; kase dat wuz him^{e4}."

Tom's most well, now, and got his bullet around his neck on a watch-guard for a watch, and is always seeing what time it is, and so there ain't nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it and ain't agoing to no more. But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before^{e5}.

THE END. YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN.

SLOT

Die eerste die beste keer toe ek Tom weer alleen in die hande ge- kry het, het ek hom gevra wat nou juis sy plan met die ontsnapping was—ek bedoel nou terwyl die ding aan die gang was: wat wou hy verder doen as die plan gewerk het en hy 'n slaaf vrygestel het wat klaar vry was ? En toe sê hy dit was uit die staanspoor sy plan dat ons saam met Jim op die vlot al met die rivier moes afry en wonderlike avonture belewe totdat ons by die mond van die rivier aankom; dan kon ons hom vertel dat hy vry was en hom op 'n stoomboot terug- neem, soos dit hóórt, en hom uitbetaal vir al die tyd wat hy verloor het, en 'n brief vooruit skryf sodat al die negers van die kontrei kon bymekaarkom en hom met 'n fakkeloptog en 'n blaasorkes die dorp inlei; dan sou hy 'n held wees, en ons saam met hom. Maar ek skat dit was maar net so wel dat die saak afgeloop het soos dit het.

In 'n japtrap het ons Jim se kettings van hom afgehaal en toe tant Polly en oom Silas en tant Sally uitvind hoe goed hy die dokter gehelp het om Tom te verpleeg, het hulle 'n groot bohaai oor hom gemaak, en gesorg dat hy alles te ete kry wat hy wil hê, en die lewe behoorlik geniet sonder om 'n stekie werk te doen. Ons het hom daar na die siekekamer toe gebring en heerlik gesels; en Tom het vir Jim veertig dollars betaal omdat hy so 'n geduldige gevangene was en hom so goed van sy taak gekwyt het, en Jim was so in sy skik dat hy iets kon oorkom.

„Sien jy nou, Huck,” het hy gesê. „Wat het ek vir jou gesê? Wat het ek vir jou daar op Jacksoneiland gesê? Ek het vir jou gesê ek het ’n harige bors, en ek het vir jou gesê wat dit beteken; en ek vir jou gesê ek was al ’n slag ryk gewees en ek gaan wéér ryk wore. En dit het nou waar gewóre—kyk net so. Toe nou, moenie jý vir my ander dinge wil kom sê nie: ’n teken is ’n teken, sê ek vir jou, en ek was séker ek gaan weer ryk wore—net so seker sos wat ek nou hier voor jou staan.”

En toe’t Tom weer aan die praat geraak en gesê ons drie moet een nag daar uitglip en uitrustings kry en dan avonture gaan soek tussen die Rooihuide in die reserwe. Ons kan ’n paar weke lank daar bly. Goed, sê ek, maar waar gaan ek geld kry vir ’n uitrusting? Van die huis af sal ek niks kry nie, want teen dié tyd was Pa sweerlik alweer terug, en dan’t hy alles uit regter Thatcher uitgekry en dit uitgesuip.

„0 nee,” sê Tom. „Hy het nie. Dis nog alles daar—meer as sesduisend dollars. Jou pa het nog nooit weer teruggekom nie. In elk geval nie voor ék daar weg is nie.”

„Hy sal ook nie weer terugkom nie,” sê Jim ernstig en half pleg- tig-

„Hoekom, Jim?” vra ek.

„Moenie vra nie, Huck. Maar ek sê vir jou hy sallie weer kom nie.”

Maar ek bly by hom neul en torring, tot hy sê: „Onthou jy daai hys wat oppie rivier gedrywe het, met die man daarin, onner ’n kombers ? Ek het hom toe mos loop oopmaak en ek wou nie gehet het jy moet kom kyk nie. Nou ja, nou kan jy maar jou gjeld loop haal as jy dit wil hê, want dit was jou pa daai.”

En nou is Tom alweer ampertjies gesond en hy dra sy koeël aan ’n horlosieketting om sy nek en hy kyk alewig hoe laat dit is; dus is daar niks meer om oor te skryf nie, en ek is baie bly ook daaroor, want as ek geweet het dit gaan so ’n gesukkel wees om ’n boek te maak, dan’t ek dit sowaar nooit aangepak nie, en ek gáán ook nooit weer nie. Maar ek skat ek sal nog voor die ander twee wegloop na die Rooi- huide se kontrei toe, want tant Sally is van plan om my aan te neem en my te beskaaf, en dis ’n ding wat ek nie kan verdra nie. Ek kén daardie storie.



DIE END DIE UWE HUCK FINN
AANHANGSEL

Die oorspronklike „Onsterflike Monoloog” in hoofstuk 21

To be, or not to be; that is the bare bodkin That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would fardels bear, till Birnam Wood do come to Dunsinane, But that the fear on something after death Murders the innocent sleep, Great nature's second course,

And makes us rather sling the arrows of outrageous fortune Than fly to others that we know not of.

There's the respect must give us pause:

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst;

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

The law's delay, and the quietus which his pangs might take,

In the dead waste and middle of the night, when churchyards yawn In customary suits of solemn black,

But that the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns,

*Breathes forth contagion on the world,
And thus the native hue of resolution, like the poor cat i' the adage,
Is sicklied o'er with care,
And all the clouds that lowered o'er our housetops,
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.
'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. But soft you, the fair Ophelia:
Ope not thy ponderous and marble jaws,
But get thee to a nunnery—go!*